

Laster im Mittelalter
Vices in the Middle Ages



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Inhaltsverzeichnis

<i>Christoph Flüeler</i> – Einleitung	7
<i>Sabine Grebe</i> – The End Justifies the Means: The Role of Deceit in Prudentius' 'Psychomachia'	11
<i>Silvana Vecchio</i> – Passions de l'âme et péchés capitaux: les ambiguïtés de la culture médiévale	45
<i>Bruno Boerner</i> – Lasterdarstellungen in der mittelalterlichen Monumentalkunst Frankreichs	65
<i>Richard Newhauser</i> – The Capital Vices as Medieval Anthropology ...	105
<i>Franz-Josef Schweitzer</i> – Das Lehrgedicht 'Des Teufels Netz' und die Konzilien von Konstanz und Basel	125
<i>Christian Schäfer</i> – Die Hauptlasterlehre des Thomas von Aquin als philosophische Anthropologie: Das Beispiel des Zinsnahmeverbots	139
<i>Karl Ubl</i> – Die Laster des Fürsten. Theorie und Praxis der Königsabsetzung um 1300	167
<i>Klaus Wolf</i> – <i>Propter utilitatem populi: Durch des nucz willen seines volkes</i> . Die 'staatstragende' Rezeption der 'Summa de vitiis' des Guilelmus Peraldus in der spätmittelalterlichen Wiener Schule ...	187
<i>Stan Benfell</i> – Avarice, Justice, and Poverty in Dante's 'Comedy' ...	201
Abkürzungen bibliographischer Angaben	231
Personenregister	233

Einleitung

Die Freiburger Kolloquien des mediävistischen Instituts widmen sich jeweils einem interdisziplinären Thema. Für die Lehre der Hauptlaster, welche später die Sieben Todsünden genannt wurden, drängt sich ein interdisziplinärer Ansatz in besonderem Masse auf. Diese berühmte Lehre umspannt das ganze Mittelalter, wurzelt in der frühchristlichen Spiritualität und war seit dem 13. Jahrhundert den meisten Christen im lateinischen Abendland, egal ob gebildet oder ungebildet, in irgendeiner Form vertraut. Sie vermochte durchaus das tägliche Leben, zum Beispiel in Predigt und Beichte, zu beeinflussen und fand in den unterschiedlichsten Werken ausführliche Erörterung. Sie beschäftigte Priester und Gelehrte, bildende Künstler und Dichter und richtete sich an jeden einfachen Sünder. Auch in der frühen Neuzeit ist die Lehre der Sieben Todsünden noch geläufig, doch haftet ihr immer etwas an, was sie einerseits fremd und gleichzeitig faszinierend macht: sie wird als (typisch) mittelalterlich und als (allgemein) menschlich verstanden. Die allgemein menschlichen Schwächen, wie Hochmut, Geiz, Geilheit, Zorn, Fresssucht, Neid und Faulheit werden als Konstanten der menschlichen Natur erlebt. Andererseits werden diese Laster immer wieder in einem anderen Kontext wahrgenommen.

Auch Laster haben natürlich eine Geschichte. Selbst wenn Lasterkataloge über Jahrhunderte tradiert wurden und sich nur durch feine, aber signifikante Änderungen zu unterscheiden scheinen, werden diese Laster immer wieder mit neuen Inhalten gefüllt und einem neuen Weltbezug angepasst. Die Laster eines Wüstenmönches unterschieden sich grundlegend von den Lastern eines Theologen an den mittelalterlichen Universitäten. Die Beschreibung der Laster wandelt sich aber nicht nur im Laufe der Zeit, sondern passt sich auch den jeweiligen Bedürfnissen an. Beichtspiegel, die der Erbauung und der Prüfung der Sünden von Laien dienten, unterscheiden sich von zeitgleichen theologischen Abhandlungen in theologischen Summen. Literarische Verarbeitungen in der Volkssprache setzen andere Akzente als ikonographische Ausdeutungen in der bildenden Kunst.

Die Geschichte dieser Lehre kann bekanntlich bis ins 4. Jahrhundert n. Chr. zurückverfolgt werden. Evagrius Ponticus (345–399), ein gelehrter Anachoret des 4. Jahrhunderts, erarbeitete aufgrund von neuplatonischen und gnostischen Elementen einen Achtlasterkatalog. Die acht Laster gastrimargía (*Gula*), porneía (*Luxuria*), philarguría (*Avaritia*), lúpe (*Tristitia*), orgé (*Ira*), akedía (*Acedia*), kenodoxía (*Inanis Gloria*) und huperephanía (*Superbia*) verstand Evagrius als ‘böse Gedanken’, die Dämonen einsetzen, um Einsiedler von ihrem Ziel, die *apatheia* zu erreichen, abzulenken. Dieses Lasterschema wurde von Johannes Cassian (360–435) übernommen und damit dem lateinischen Westen überliefert. Zwei Jahrhunderte später wurde die Lasterlehre von Gregor dem Grossen (~540–604) in seiner ‘Moralia in Iob’ einer grundlegenden Wandlung unterzogen. Gregor kennt offensichtlich Cassians Lasterkatalog, nimmt aber nur sieben Hauptlaster an, wobei diesen Hauptlastern der Stolz (*Superbia*) als *regina* oder *radix* übergeordnet wird, aus der die anderen Laster entspringen. Ferner führt Gregor den Neid (*Invidia*) als neues Laster ein, fasst aber *Acedia* und Traurigkeit (lúpe, *Tristitia*) zu einem einzigen Laster, der *Tristitia*, zusammen. Gregors Lasterkatalog hatte einen kaum zu unterschätzenden Einfluss auf die christliche Literatur des Abendlandes, wobei dieser Katalog häufig mit demjenigen Cassians kombiniert wurde. Im 12. Jahrhundert wurden die verschiedenen Modelle vereinheitlicht und eine leicht korrigierte Fassung des Gregorianischen Lasterkatalogs mit sieben Lastern setzte sich durch. Die sieben Laster Stolz (*Superbia*), Geiz (*Avaritia*), Geilheit (*Luxuria*), Neid (*Invidia*), Völlerei (*Gula*), Zorn (*Ira*) und die *Acedia* wurden seit dem 12. Jahrhundert in einer schier unübersehbaren Fülle von theologischen Abhandlungen, in pastoralen Schriften (Predigthandbücher, Bussbücher, etc.) und literarischen Werken beschrieben.

Die Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Lasterlehre wurde – wie nicht anders zu erwarten – von Mittelalterforschern aus verschiedenen Disziplinen vorangetrieben. Morton W. Bloomfields ‘The Seven Deadly Sins. An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature’ hatte vor allem im angelsächsischen Sprachraum einen grösseren Einfluss, auch wenn Siegfried Wenzel, ebenfalls Literaturwissenschaftler, dem wir die nach wie vor grundlegende

1 Die vollständigen Angaben der häufig zitierten Literatur finden sich am Ende des Bandes in der Rubrik “Abkürzungen bibliographischer Angaben”.

Studie über die *Acedia* verdanken,² knapp zwei Jahrzehnte später in seinem anregenden Beitrag ‘The Seven Deadly Sins: Some Problems of Research’³ anmerkte, dass Bloomfields ‘Introduction’ offensichtlich und wider Erwarten keine grössere Arbeit über dieses fruchtbare Gebiet veranlasst habe: “no major study on the seven chief vices an closely related subjects has appeared” (ibid., S. 1).

In den letzten Jahren hat jedoch das Interesse an der Lasterlehre deutlich zugenommen durch wichtige Studien von Richard Newhauser, der neben mehreren Monographien,⁴ Sammelbänden⁵ und zahlreichen Artikeln,⁶ neulich zusammen mit István Bejczy eine überaus verdienstvolle Überarbeitung des ‘Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100–1500 A.D.’ vorlegte.⁷

Von der italienischen Philosophiegeschichte her betrachtet, widmen sich ebenso eindringlich und pointiert seit Jahren Silvia Vecchio und Carla Casagrande der Lasterlehre. Ihre anregende Untersuchung über das *vitium linguae*, die Zungensünde,⁸ ebenso wie die Darstellung ‘I sette

2 Wenzel, Siegfried, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature*, Chapel Hill, NC 1967; zur *Acedia* siehe auch Flüeler, Christoph, *Melancholia und Acedia im Spätmittelalter*, in: *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 34 (1987) S. 379–398.

3 Wenzel, *The Seven Deadly Sins*.

4 Newhauser, *Vices and Virtues*; ders., *Early History of Greed*.

5 Hier vor allem: *In the Garden of Evil*, aber auch Beiträge, die ursprünglich aus einem Forschungsseminar entstanden sind: *The Seven Deadly Sins: From Communities to Individuals*, hg. v. Richard Newhauser (*Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions: History, Culture, Religion, Ideas* 123), Leiden/Boston 2007, S. 1–17.

6 Ein Reprint von wichtigen Artikeln liegt neuerdings leicht greifbar vor in: Newhauser, Richard, *Sin: Essays on the Moral Tradition in the Western Middle Ages* (*Variorum Collected Studies Series* 869), Aldershot 2007.

7 Bloomfield, Morton W. et al., *Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100–1500 A.D.* (*Publications of the Mediaeval Academy of America* 88), Cambridge, MA 1979 und Newhauser, Richard und István Bejczy, *A Supplement to Morton W. Bloomfield et al., ‘Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100–1500 A.D.’* (*Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia* 50), Turnhout 2008.

8 Casagrande, Carla und Silvana Vecchio, *I peccati della lingua. Discipline ed etica della parola nella cultura medievale*, Roma 1987.

vizi capitali. Storia dei peccati nel Medioevo” liegen auch in französischer Übersetzung vor.

Auf kunsthistorischer Seite legte Bruno Boerner 1998 in dieser Reihe eine Arbeit vor, die frühere Studien von Adolf Katzenellenbogen und anderen in Bezug auf die Lasterdarstellungen weiterführte.¹⁰

Die Tagung am Mediävistischen Institut, die vom 20. bis 22. Februar 2006 stattfand, versuchte sich aus verschiedenen Disziplinen dem Thema zu nähern. Altphilologen (Grebe), Philosophiehistoriker (Vecchio, Schäfer), germanistische (Schweitzer, Wolf), romanistische (Benfell) und englische Literaturwissenschaftler (Newhauser), Historiker (Ubl, Karpov) und Kunsthistoriker (Boerner, Kurmann) haben während zwei Tagen in verschiedenen Sprachen, wie das in Freiburg häufig der Fall ist, Aspekte der mittelalterlichen Lasterlehre beleuchtet. Einige Laster wurden dabei stärker behandelt als andere. Grundlegende Fragen der Verkettung der Laster (Newhauser) oder der anthropologischen Begründung der Lasterlehre (Vecchio) wurden ebenso gestellt, wie detaillierte Deutungen eines Lasters bei einem einzelnen Autor (so Benfell über den Geiz bei Dante, Schäfer über das Zinsnahmeverbot bei Thomas von Aquin oder Grebe über Täuschung bei Prudentius). Das Treffen hat ebenfalls deutlich gezeigt, dass in Zukunft noch wichtige Lücken geschlossen werden müssen. So zentrale Werke wie die Lastersumme von Wilhelm Peraldus, deren Rezeption sich ein Beitrag widmet (Wolf), bleibt weiterhin eines der vielen Desiderate.

Dem Schweizerischen Nationalfonds, der Schweizerischen Akademie für Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaft und dem Rektorat der Universität sei abschliessend für die grosszügige Unterstützung der Tagung im Namen des Mediävistischen Instituts ganz herzlich gedankt.

Freiburg im Oktober 2008

Christoph Flüeler

9 Casagrande et Vecchio, I sette vizi capitali.

10 Boerner, Bruno, Par caritas par meritum. Studien zur Theologie des gotischen Weltgerichtsportals in Frankreich – am Beispiel des mittleren Westeingangs von Notre-Dame in Paris (Scriinium Friburgense 7), Freiburg i.Ue. 1998.

The End Justifies the Means: The Role of Deceit in Prudentius' 'Psychomachia'

Sabine Grebe (*Guelph, Canada*)

1. Introduction

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, the first great Christian poet, was born in Spain in 348 and died after 405. Thus, he was a contemporary of the Roman emperors, Julian the Apostate (361–363), Gratian (375–383), Theodosius I (379–395), and Theodosius' son, Honorius (395–423). These are the emperors who were most important for the struggle between paganism and Christianity in the western provinces of the Roman Empire. In Prudentius' day, the Roman Empire was under military pressure due to the barbaric invasions. In addition, the Empire witnessed the religious conflicts between two sets of adversaries: pagans with Christians, and the orthodox Christians with the heretics. Prudentius abandoned a career in the government administration for Christian poetry. He wrote hymns (the 'Cathemerinon Liber' and the 'Peristephanon'), didactic poetry (the 'Apotheosis', the 'Hamartigenia', the 'Psychomachia', the 'Dittochaeon'), and the apologetic poem 'Contra Symmachum'. A *Praefatio* commences the collection and an *Epilogus* ends it. The *Praefatio* states the aim Prudentius pursues with his poetry:

pugnet contra hereses, catholicam discutiat fidem
conculcet sacra gentium,
labem, Roma, tuis inferat idolis,
carmen martyribus devoveat, laudet apostolos. (Praef., 39–42)

Let her [sc. Prudentius' soul] fight against heresies, expound the Catholic faith, trample on the rites of the heathen, strike down thy idols, O Rome, devote song to the martyrs, and praise the apostles.¹

1 Latin text: Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, *Carmina*, ed. by Maurice P. Cunningham (CCL 126), Turnhout 1966, p. 149–181. The English translations of

My paper will concentrate on the 'Psychomachia', the 'Battle of the Soul'. This Christian allegory describes a series of epic combats between personified Virtues and Vices:² *Fides* versus *Cultura Veterum Deorum*, *Pudicitia* versus *Libido*, *Patientia* versus *Ira*, *Mens Humilis* and *Spes* versus *Superbia* and *Fraus*, *Sobrietas* versus *Luxuria*, *Ratio* and *Operatio* versus *Avaritia*, and finally *Concordia* and *Fides* versus *Discordia cognomento Heresis* (Psych., 710). Prudentius depicts the Virtues and Vices unarmed. They are characterised by their behaviour and actions. The seven battles are preceded by sixty-eight lines which narrate the story of Abraham. The building of a new temple for *Sapientia* (804–915) concludes the poem.

Deceit appears in several passages in the 'Psychomachia', and Prudentius seems to have an ambiguous attitude towards it. My thesis is that Deceit stands for heresy, Humility for orthodox Christianity, and Pride for the paganism of the Roman aristocracy. With this in mind, I shall show that the ambiguous image of deceit is linked with the political and ecclesiastical history of the late Roman Empire. On the one hand, Prudentius generally interprets deceit in negative terms. On the other hand, Prudentius justifies Deceit (that is, heresy) if it helps Humility (that is, orthodox Christianity) to conquer Pride (that is, the paganism of the Roman aristocrats). That is, heresy is justified to help orthodox Christianity to overwhelm the paganism of the Roman aristocrats.

Deceit is generally understood as the concealment or distortion of the truth for the purpose of misleading. Its practices are many: ambushing, cheating, disguise, falseness, fraud, guile, hypocrisy, lies, pretence, stratagems, traps, trickery, wiles, and so on. Deceit operates outside the framework of expectations. Cunning and unpredictability take the other party by surprise. The intent of deceit is evil.

Since deceit has these numerous negative connotations, it is surprising that Prudentius also presents Deceit as 'assisting' Humility in her combat against Pride. And, yet, Deceit is Pride's ally and does not intend to support Humility. That Humility is eventually aided by Deceit is a mere coincidence. How are we to interpret the contest between Pride and

Prudentius' works are drawn from: Prudentius. With an English Translation, ed. by H.J. Thomson, 2 vols., Cambridge, MA/London 1949–1953.

2 I have capitalised the Virtues and Vices where Prudentius personifies them in his 'Psychomachia'. For the seven deadly sins see Gothein, Marie, *Die Todsünden*, in: *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 10 (1907) p. 416–484; Bloomfield, *Seven Deadly Sins*.

Humility? Does one Vice (Deceit) overcome another Vice (Pride)? Can Deceit have a positive meaning if it leads to the defeat of Pride? This would suggest that there is no clear-cut division between good and evil in the ‘Psychomachia’. Perhaps, here, we should interpret the battle between Humility, Deceit, and Pride in a more subtle way. Does Prudentius intend to inform his audience that man is deceived if he considers himself able to eliminate pride in particular and the vices in general? Or do we have to look for an explanation for Prudentius’ ambiguous attitude towards deceit in a completely different direction? Does the political and ecclesiastical history of Prudentius’ day play a role in our interpretation of the combat between Humility, Deceit, and Pride? By political and ecclesiastical history I mean the conflict between Christianity and paganism as well as the doxological controversies inside the Church. Does the ‘Psychomachia’ present the contests between Virtues and Vices on the surface-level of the text and does the subtext of the epic reflect the history of the late fourth and early fifth centuries?

I shall make my argument against the background of Prudentius’ ambiguous description of deceit. On the one hand, he warns against the dangers of deceit. On the other, Deceit eventually ‘assists’ Humility to defeat Pride. I shall further demonstrate that late fourth- and early fifth-centuries history is reflected in the battle between Pride, Humility, and Deceit. Finally, I claim that Prudentius struggles to unify all Christians by means of his poetry. For, he is convinced that paganism can be overcome, if the heretics and the orthodox Christians join their forces.

2. Prudentius’ Ambiguous Description of Deceit

a. Warnings against deceit

Prudentius mentions the uncertainty about the outcome of the combats in the very first line of the description of the contests between the Virtues and the Vices: “subject to the doubtful chance of battle” (Psych., 21: *dubia sub sorte duelli*). This lack of confidence in the victory of the Virtues is proven correct after the sixth battle. Until then, the Virtues have won all the battles and proceed to celebrate their victories. The Virtues take off their armour (Psych., 633–635), the war trumpets are silent (Psych., 636), the sword is peacefully in the sheath (Psych., 636–637), and the dust settles down on the battlefield (Psych., 637–639). Concordia

gives the signal to take the victorious standards back to camp and leads the Virtues to their tents (Psych., 644–649).

This atmosphere of returning to peace is suddenly destroyed by an unexpected attack of evil, however:

nascitur hic inopina Mali lacrimabilis astu
tempestas, placidae turbatrix invida Pacis,
quae tantum subita vexaret clade triumphum. (Psych., 667–669)

Here arises a storm unlooked for, through the cunning of a woeful Evil, to spite and trouble calm Peace and disturb the great triumph with a sudden disaster.

Three words emphasise the fact that peace exists only on the surface and that war still lurks underneath the surface: *inopina* (unexpected), *astu* (with cunning), and *subita* (sudden; cf. Psych., 694: *subito*). Deceit involves an unexpected, sudden action. It also suggests cunning, the consequence of which is disastrous for peace.

Deception continues in the following description of the injury inflicted by a Vice upon Concord:

excipit occultum Vitii latitantis ab ictu
mucronem laevo in latere. (Psych., 672–673)

[Sc. Concord] receives a treacherous thrust in her left side from the stroke of a lurking Vice.

Prudentius carefully places *occultum* (hidden) and *latitantis* (lurking) around *Vitii* (Vice). The word order expresses that the Vice is deeply immersed in deception. Further, *latitare* is the frequentative verb of *latere* and, thus, underlines the deceit even more so (see also *latet* in Psych., 695). Later the Vice is called “treacherous” (Psych., 681: *subdola*); the prefix *sub-* stresses that A lies hidden underneath B so that A cannot be seen. The Vice “has lied in ambush” (Psych., 682: *insidiata est*).

Who is this vice which, so far, Prudentius has given general names like Evil (Psych., 667: *Mali*) and Vice (Psych., 672: *Vitii*)? After eighteen lines he finally discloses the name: it is Discord (Psych., 683: *Discordia*).³ And after twenty-six more hexameters, the poet is more specific about Dis-

3 Malamud, Martha A., *A Poetics of Transformation. Prudentius and Classical Mythology* (Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 49), Ithaca, NY/London 1989, p. 63–65, studies *Discordia*’s deceitful character.

cord's name by adding the name 'Heresy' (Psych., 710: *cognomento Heresis*).

Prudentius describes discord as follows:

nam pulsa culparum acie Discordia nostros
intrarat cuneos sociam mentita figuram.
Scissa procul palla structum et serpente flagellum
multiplici media camporum in strage iacebant.
Ipsa redimitos olea frondente capillos
ostentans festis respondet laeta choraeis;
sed sicam sub veste tegit, te, maxima Virtus,
te solam tanto e numero, Concordia, tristi
fraude petens.

(Psych., 683–691)

For, when the Vices' army was driven off, Discord had entered our ranks wearing the counterfeit shape of a friend. Her torn mantle and her whip of many snakes were left lying far behind amid the heaps of dead on the field of battle, while she herself, displaying her hair wreathed with leafy olive, answered cheerfully the joyous revellers. But she has a dagger hidden under the raiment, seeking to attack thee, thou greatest of Virtues, thee alone, Concord, of all this number, with bitter treachery.

Discord appears as the epitome of pretence. I underlined all the expressions which describe her deceit of Concord. After the Vices have been conquered all the Vices leave the battlefield except for Discord. She follows the Virtues into their camp and pretends (*mentita*) to be their ally (*sociam*). Discord has treacherously left the symbols of strife, her torn mantle (*scissa palla*) and her whip of many snakes (*serpente flagellum multiplici*), on the battlefield so that nobody can recognise her true identity. She passively hides her true nature by leaving behind her attributes. In addition, she actively tries to change her identity by disguising herself as a peaceful Virtue. The leaves of an olive tree (*olea frondente*), the symbol of peace, decorate her hair. Further, Discord joyfully mingles with the Virtues celebrating their victories (*festis respondet laeta choreis*) and thereby pretends to belong to the Virtues. But she has a dagger hidden under her garment (*sed sicam sub veste tegit*) for the purpose of attacking Concord with bitter fraud (*tristi fraude*). And Discord does wound Concord (Psych., 692–693).

Using the symbols of strife and peace, Prudentius contrasts Discord and Concord. Yet, he goes a step beyond the mere opposition of a Vice and a Virtue by describing the cunning methods which deceit exhibits. This is quite appropriate because Discord represents heresy and Concord

stands for the unity of the Christians. From the viewpoint of an orthodox Christian, like Prudentius, heresy deceives people and alienates them from their true faith. Heresy thereby causes strife amongst the Christians.

Discord disguises herself as a Virtue and pretends to be a member of the Virtues in order to attack Concord. The Virtues are misled by this deception: they do not see the threatening peril. Because they do not foresee any evil, they are an easy booty for Discord. Accordingly, Discord's attack takes Concord by surprise (Psych., 694: *subito*; 695: *latet*; 797: *furtiva manus*). Discord's disguise resembles the wolf who conceals his true nature by covering his body with sheepskin:

latet et lupus ore cruento
lacteolam mentitus ovem sub vellere molli,
cruda per agninos exercens funera rictus. (Psych., 791–793)

The wolf, too, with his gory jaws, conceals himself in a soft fleece, counterfeiting a milk-white sheep, while he carries on his bloody murders by devouring the lambs.

The false semblance of the wolf deludes the sheep and prevents them from recognising the deadly danger which threatens them. In his disguise it is easy for the wolf to attack the sheep.

The deceptions carried out by Discord and by the wolf represent the lurking danger caused by heresy for orthodox Christianity. As Discord beguiles the Virtues and as the wolf deludes the sheep, so the heretics, like Photinus and Arius, deceive the orthodox Christians:

hac sese occultat Photinus et Arrius arte,
inmanes feritate lupi. (Psych., 794–795)

It is by this device that Photinus and Arrius⁴ disguise themselves, those wolves so wild and savage.

Photinus and Arius, to whom I shall return later in Section Three (d), are wolves (*lupi*) in a sheepskin. Again, Prudentius uses the frequentative verb (*occultare* “to hide”, “to conceal” is the frequentative form of *occultare*). He uses this verb in order to reinforce his argument.

Prudentius alludes to deceit amongst Christians in two other passages of his ‘Psychomachia’. After the sixth combat the Vices are leaving the battlefield. One of the Vices is “Fraud that denies accepted faith”

4 The spelling with only one “r” is more familiar.

(Psych., 630: *placitae fidei Fraus infitiatrix*). *Fides* describes the orthodox faith and *Fraus* denotes the false faith of the non-orthodox Christians and pagans. The noun *infitiatrix*, *icis*, f. “she that denies” is a *hapax legomenon* which is derived from *infitiari* “to deny” and *infitiae, arum*, f. “denial”. *Infitiatrix* has its counterpart in *placita* “she that is agreed to”, “she that is accepted”. The very juxtaposition of *Fides* and *Fraus* as well as their respective attributes, *placita* and *infitiatrix*, clearly express the conflicts between the orthodox Christians on the one hand and the heretics and pagans on the other.

After Discord has been defeated, Concord warns against “hidden enmities” (Psych., 759–760: *tectis odiis*) at home – that is, among the Christians:

publica sed requies privatis rure foroque
constat amicitiiis. Scissura domestica turbat
rem populi titubatque foris quod dissidet intus.
Ergo cavete, viri, ne sit sententia discors
sensibus in nostris, ne secta exotica tectis
nascatur conflata odiis, quia fissa voluntas
confundit variis arcana biformia fibris.
Quod sapimus coniungat amor, quod vivimus uno
conspiret studio. Nil dissociabile firmum est.
Utque homini atque Deo medius intervenit Iesus,
qui sociat mortale Patri ne carnea distent
Spiritus aeterno sitque ut Deus unus utrumque,
sic quidquid gerimus mentisque et corporis actu
spiritus unimodis texat conpagibus unus. (Psych., 755–768)

But the nation’s peace depends on good will between its citizens in field and town. Division at home upsets the common weal and difference within means faltering abroad. Therefore be on the watch, my soldiers, that there be no discordant thought among our Sentiments, that no foreign faction arise in us from the occasion of hidden quarrels; for a divided will creates disorder in our inmost nature, making two parties in a heart at variance. Let our understanding be united by love, our life be in accord in a single aim; where there is separation there is no strength. And just as Jesus mediates between man and God, uniting mortality with the Father so that the fleshly shall not be separated from the eternal Spirit and that one God shall be both, so let one spirit shape in single structure all that we do by action of soul and body.

This passage is divided into two parts of the same length. The first half (755–761) has a strong emphasis on disharmony: *scissura* (a tearing), *dissidet* (it is divided), *discors* (discordant), *fissa* (split), and *biformia* (two-

formed). The frequent use of the letter “s” underlines the discord with its sharp, snake-like sibilant sound. A snake, of course, is associated with something that is hidden and deceitful. The second half (762–768) stresses harmony and unity: *coniungat* (let it unite), *uno studio* (in a single zeal), *conspiret* (let it breathe together), *sociat* (he joins together), *ne distent* (that they may not be separated), *Deus unus* (one God), *unimodis compagibus* (in a connection of one sort), *texat* (let it join together), and *spiritus unus* (one spirit). Prudentius uses the word *unus* four times in seven lines. He endeavours to point out the harmony at home (that is, among the Christians) and the unity of mortal flesh and divine spirit (that is, of Son and Father).⁵ We shall see in Section Three (d) that this unity was much debated in the Church in the fourth century. Further, Prudentius stresses the importance of domestic peace. Peace is necessary to withstand foreign attacks. This statement alludes to the spiritual warfare inside the soul. The soul must have peace in order to be strong to fight attacks from outside. Satan who infiltrates and plants his ministers (that is, the vices) inside the soul, attacks the soul from the outside (cf. Prudentius, *Hamartigenia*, 389–408). Further, we shall see in Section Three that ‘domestic’ refers to all Christians (that is, the orthodox Christians and the heretics) and that ‘foreign’ may be related to the pagan Romans and the heretics.

Most of the texts discussed so far address deceit among the Virtues: that is, among the Christians (*Psych.*, 667–725; 755–768). Here, Prudentius warns against hidden quarrels between the orthodox Christians and the heretics. The ‘*Psychomachia*’ refers not only to religious deception but also to deceit which concerns one’s indulgence towards hidden vices and bodily temptations. For example, Greed says that it does not matter whether she defeats her enemy “by arms or by guile”:⁶

quid moror aut Iudae populares aut populares
sacricolae summi (summus nam fertur Aaron)
fallere fraude aliqua Martis congressibus inpar?
Nil refert armis contingat palma dolisve. (Psych., 547–550)

Why not trick with some device the countrymen of Judah or of the chief priest (for they call Aaron chief), since I cannot match them in the clash of battle? It matters not whether the prize of victory comes by arms or by guile.

5 In his ‘Apotheosis’, Prudentius emphasises the unity of Father and Son who are *unus Deus*.

6 Newhauser, *Early History of Greed*, discusses *Avaritia* in detail.

These four lines contain three words which express deceit: *fallere* (to trick), *fraude* (with fraud), and *dolis* (with guiles). The rhetorical question even stresses Greed's evil intent. Greed knows that she cannot conquer her enemies, Reason and Good Works, in an open battle and, for this reason, employs guile. Greed cunningly disguises herself as Thrift:

dixerat et torvam faciem furialiaque arma
 exuit inque habitum sese transformat honestum.
 Fit Virtus specie vultuque et veste severa
 quam memorant Frugi, parce cui vivere cordi est
 et servare suum. Tamquam nil raptet avarae,
 artis adumbratae meruit ceu sedula laudem.
 Huius se specie mendax Bellona coaptat,
 non ut avara lues sed Virtus parca putetur;
 nec non et tenero pietatis tegmine crines
 obteggit anguinos, ut candida palla latentem
 dissimulet rabiem, diroque obtenta furori,
 quod rapere et clepere est avidaeque abscondere parta,
 natorum curam dulci sub nomine iacet. (Psych., 551-563)

With these words she puts off her grim look and her fiendish weapons, and changes to a noble bearing. In appearance, with austere mien and dress, she becomes the Virtue men call Thrifty, whose pleasure it is to live sparingly and save what she has; she looks as if she never snatched aught with greedy hands, and with her air of carefulness she has gained repute for the quality she counterfeits. With this Virtue's likeness the false Bellona equips herself, so as to be thought not a greedy pest but a thrifty Virtue. With a delicate covering of motherly devotion she hides her snaky tresses so that the white mantle shall disguise the raging that lurks beneath and screen the fearful fury, and so display her plundering and thieving and greedy storing of her gains under the pleasing name of care for her children.

Greed modifies (*transformat*) her outward appearance. She transforms her former grim face (*torvam faciem*) and her dreadful weapons (*furialiaque arma*) into an austere (*severa*) and noble appearance (*habitum honestum*). This disguise makes Greed resemble the Virtue of Thrift. Yet, the voracity is still lurking underneath the cover (*latentem rabiem*). Many words express Greed's fraud: *transformat* (she transforms), *mendax* (lying), *tegmene* (with a covering), *obteggit* (she hides), *dissimulet* (it may disguise), and *obtenta* (covered). Due to this concealment Greed is believed not to be an *avara lues* (greedy pest) but a *Virtus parca* (thrifty Virtue). She hides her robbing (*raptet avarae*, *rapere*), stealing (*clepere*), and greedy storing (*avideque abscondere*) and pretends to live frugally

(*parce vivere*) and to save what she has (*servare suum*). Extreme opposites shape the whole passage. Hiding her true nature of a Vice and pretending to be a Virtue, Greed resembles Discord whose tricks are described in *Psych.*, 683–691.

In her perfect disguise Greed misleads men and the Virtues:

talibus inludens male credula corda virorum
fallit imaginibus. Monstrumque feral sequuntur
dum credunt Virtutis opus. Capit inopia Erinys
consensu faciles manicisque tenacibus artat.
Attonitis ducibus perturbatisque manipulis
nutabat Virtutum acies errore biformis
portenti ignorans quid amicum credat in illo
quidve hostile notet. Letum versatile et anceps
lubricat incertos dubia sub imagine visus. (Psych., 564–572)

With such semblances she befools men and cheats their too credulous hearts. They follow the deadly monster, believing hers to be a Virtue's work, and the wicked fiend takes them, easy, willing victims, and binds them with gripping shackles. Their leaders bewildered, their companies confounded, the Virtues' line is faltering; for they are misled by the monster's twofold figure and know not where to see a friend in her and where to mark a foe. The deadly creature's changing, double form makes their sight unsteady and dubious, not knowing what to make of her appearance.

Prudentius complains here that men are too credulous (*male credula*) and, therefore, easy victims of Greed (*consensu faciles*). Greed's metamorphosis (*biformis*, *versatile*, *anceps*) confuses (*incertos*) men so that they are unable (*ignorans*) to distinguish between good (*amicum*) and evil (*hostile*). The vice of Greed, disguised as the virtue of Thriftiness, is a deadly monster (*monstrumque feral*; cf. *letum versatile et anceps*). Yet, all her cunning concealment does not help Greed to overcome the Virtues. In the end, no "method of trickery" (*Psych.*, 586: *fraudis via*) remains for Greed and she is defeated by Good Works.

In the epilogue of the 'Psychomachia', Prudentius again addresses the struggle against the lurking dangers:

tu nos corporei latebrosa pericula aperti
luctantisque animae voluisti agnoscere casus. (Psych., 891–892)

Thou [sc. Christ] didst wish us to learn the dangers that lurk unseen within the body, and the vicissitudes of our soul's struggle.

Christ wished men to recognise the lurking dangers of the body and the struggles of the soul. Two words, *latebrosa* (lurking in concealment) and *operti* (hidden), express concealment. The latter is a device of deceit.

b. Deceit as an unexpected 'ally' of a Virtue

So far, we have looked at texts which deal with the negative side of deceit. Now, we shall analyse a passage where Prudentius describes deceit from a different angle. In lines 178 to 309 he describes the combat between Pride (*Superbia*) and Humility (*Mens Humilis*). In the same way that Pride is the mother of all Vices, so too Humility is the root of all Virtues. This battle is the fourth contest between a Vice and a Virtue. It lies at the very centre of all seven battles.⁷ *Superbia* is assisted by Deceit (*Fraus*) and *Mens Humilis* by Hope (*Spes*). *Fraus* has secretly dug a pit in which *Superbia* eventually falls. Prudentius writes that Humility does not know anything about the trap and that she does not fall into it simply because she is further away from the pit than Pride (Psych., 267–269). *Superbia* boastfully speaks against *Mens Humilis*. Pride ridicules her opponent as a meek Virtue because Humility is accompanied by feeble allies and carries weak weapons which can by no means compete with Pride's own powerful weapons (Psych., 206–252). The battle between *Mens Humilis* and *Superbia* seems to be a combat fought with unequal means: it seems as if the weakness of Humility does not have the slightest chance against the strength of Pride. The first twenty lines describe lofty *Superbia* and her horse (Psych., 178–197). *Mens Humilis* is not mentioned until line 199. "Almost as an afterthought, *Mens Humilis* is eventually introduced, buried in the middle of a sentence" (Psych., 197–200).⁸

Whereas Pride is by her nature self-destructive, Humility is an essentially passive Virtue which needs support. Surprisingly, this aid emanates from Deceit. However, it is Deceit's intention to support Pride rather than Humility. *Superbia* triumphantly spurs on her horse in order to attack *Mens Humilis*. Over-self-confident and blindly trusting in her

7 As Nugent, S. Georgia, *Allegory and Poetics. The Structure and Imagery of Prudentius' 'Psychomachia'* (= Studien zur klassischen Philologie 14), Frankfurt a.M./Bern 1985, p. 35, points out, the battle between Pride and Humility "marks a turning point. Here we move decisively from the shorter battles to the longer, from the simpler oppositions to the more complex".

8 Nugent (note 7), p. 35.

strength, Pride is unaware of the pit cunningly dug by Deceit. Pride falls headlong into the pit and, trapped, is at Humility's mercy (Psych., 253–273). The tables are now turned. It is *Superbia* who is helpless, and it is *Mens Humilis* who is in the position of power. By their respective natures, Humility embodies inferiority and Pride superiority. Yet, due to *Superbia*'s fall, inferiority and superiority are reversed. Now Humility is superior to Pride in a double sense. First, in contrast with *Superbia* who is trapped in the pit, *Mens Humilis* is fully capable to fight. Second, Humility stands at the edge of the pit. Her location is above that of Pride. *Superbia*'s superiority is self-destructive and leads to her inferiority and defeat.

Humility calmly steps to the pit, raises her face a little, and assumes a friendly expression (Psych., 274–277). Her behaviour is not at all appropriate to the occasion. She hesitates to kill Pride, and Hope must encourage Humility to strike the deathblow to Pride. *Spes* hands over her sword to *Mens Humilis* and inculcates a “desire for glory” in her (Psych., 279: *laudisque amorem*). *Laudis amor* surely is a characteristic of Pride, not of humble Humility. It is not until *Mens Humilis* has adopted this desire that she decapitates *Superbia* (Psych., 278–283; see Fig. 1).⁹ Humility's victory over Pride shows the problematic relationship between the Virtues and the Vices in the ‘Psychomachia’. Both are similar to each other. To defeat a Vice the opposing Virtue must adopt some of her characteristics.¹⁰

Pride perishes on account of her very nature. Her demise enacts Proverbs 16:18: “Pride goeth before a fall”. Christian Gnülka points out that Pride's fall refers to another biblical proverb: “If he digs a pit, he will fall into it” (Psalms 7:16–17; 57:7; Proverbs 26:27). Prudentius changes the concept of retaliation expressed in this proverb. For the ditch into which *Superbia* falls has not been dug by herself but by *Fraus*. As Gnülka explains, the poet cannot assign the role of digging the pit to Pride. This would not suit her conceited character. Her over-self-confidence does not allow her to consider any trickery in her battle against Humility. Consequently, Prudentius had to introduce *Fraus* to fabricate the guile.

9 Smith, Macklin, Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. A Reexamination, Princeton, N.J. 1976, p. 182, is wrong in writing that *Spes* decapitates *Superbia*.

10 Malamud (note 3), p. 66–68; Already Lewis, Clive Staples, *The Allegory of Love. A Study in Medieval Tradition*, London 1959 (1st ed. 1936), p. 69–70, observes the incompatibility of fighting and the Virtues.

Unlike other Vices who are psychologically connected with their allies,¹¹ *Fraus* does not have any natural relationship with *Superbia*. All these observations lead Gnilka to conclude that the only reason why Deceit appears in the combat between Pride and Humility rests in the motif of the ditch and the concept of retaliation associated with the fabrication of the pit.¹² This interpretation does not satisfactorily explain *Fraus*' role in the battle, as we shall see in Section Three. From the perspective of Pride, Deceit, and Humility, it is a mere coincidence that *Superbia*, and not *Mens Humilis*, falls into the ditch. In the broader context of the battles between the Virtues and Vices, however, *Superbia*'s demise is an act of retaliation for her wrong-doing.

S. Georgia Nugent analyses the linguistic, theological, and political issues of the contrast between height and lowliness of Pride and Humility.¹³ She studies the puns of high and low (*super/superbia* and *humus/humilis*) in the opposition of Pride to Humility. Nugent shows that *humus* refers to Adam, who was created from earth, and who fell, like Pride. Thus, the combat between *Superbia* and *Mens Humilis* also alludes to original sin and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise. Finally, Nugent elaborates the political significance of the battle. Pride embodies *Romanitas* and claims to be superior to Humility because of her pedigree and the Roman values which distinguish herself from *Mens Humilis*. Consequently, the contrast of Pride and Humility alludes to the opposition between the Roman state and the Church. We shall analyse this conflict below in Section Three (b and c).

Before we study the role of Deceit in the battle of *Superbia* versus *Mens Humilis*, we must briefly discuss Hope who urges Humility to kill Pride. The most famous occurrence of hope in ancient mythology is the Pandora-story. Zeus wished to punish the human race, to which Prometheus had just given fire. Zeus designed Pandora to bring misfortune to men. She had a jar filled with hope and all the evils in the world. When she lifted the lid, the evils escaped from the pot. Only hope, which was at the bottom, was trapped in the jar when Pandora replaced the lid. This myth contains a very ambiguous idea of hope. What is hope doing

11 *Luxuria*'s allies, the *nugatrix acies* (Psych., 433), describe her nature (Psych., 432–446). *Avaritia* is accompanied by several personified characteristics of a greedy person (Psych., 464–465).

12 Gnilka, Christian, *Studien zur Psychomachie des Prudentius* (= *Klassisch-philologische Studien* 27), Wiesbaden 1963, esp. p. 59–62.

13 Nugent (note 7), p. 36–40.

among all the evils? If it is a good, why, then, is it included in a pot full of evils? If hope is an evil, why is it prevented from leaving the pot? Is hope a blessing or a curse? Is it thanks to hope that men can cope with all the terrors in their lives? Does hope inspire the human being with lofty ambition? Or does it delude men from turning a blind eye to their misery and, thereby, prolonging their misery instead of ending it? This ambiguous nature of Hope – a blessing on the one hand and a deceit on the other – is expressed in the dialogue between Prometheus and the chorus of Oceanids in Aeschylus' 'Prometheus Bound' (248–252).¹⁴

Prudentius does not have this ambiguous nature of hope in mind. He is a Christian and writes Christian poetry. Consequently, he does not employ pagan myths. Rather, he thinks of hope as one of the three major Christian virtues: faith, hope, and charity (I Corinthians 13). That there is nothing delusive about Hope in the 'Psychomachia' is also evident from line 278 where Prudentius speaks about her as Humility's "faithful comrade Hope" (*Spes fida comes*).

Let us now look at Prudentius' description of Deceit:

sed cedit in foveam praeceps, quam callida forte
 Fraus interciso subfoderat aequare furtim,
 Fraus detestandis Vitiorum e pestibus una
fallendi versuta opifex, quae praescia belli
 planitiem scrobibus vitiaverat insidiosis
 hostili de parte latens, ut fossa ruentes
 exciperet cuneos atque agmina mersa voraret,
 ac, ne fallacem puteum deprendere posset
 cauta acies, virgis adopertas texerat oras
 et superinposito simularat caespitem campum.
 At regina humilis, quamvis ignara, manebat
 ulteriore loco nec adhuc ad Fraudis opertum
 venerat aut foveae calcarat furta malignae.
 Hunc eques illa dolum, dum fertur praepete cursu,
 incidit et caecum subito patefecit hiatum. (Psych., 257–271)

But she [sc. Pride] falls headlong into a pit which as it chanced cunning Deceit had privily dug across the field – Deceit, one of those cursed plagues, the Vices, a crafty worker of trickery, who foreseeing the war had secretly broken the level earth with treacherous trenches on the enemy's side, that the ditch might catch their regiments in their onrush and the columns plunge into it and

14 Morford, Mark P.O. and Robert J. Lenardon, Classical Mythology, 7th ed., New York/Oxford 2003, p. 88.