

BRUNETTO

LI

# LIVRES DOU TRESOR

PAR BRUNETTO LATINI

PUBLIÉ POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS

D'APRÈS LES MANUSCRITS DE LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE IMPÉRIALE

DE LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE DE L'ARSENAL

ET PLUSIEURS MANUSCRITS DES DÉPARTEMENTS ET DE L'ÉTRANGER

PAR P. CHABAILLE

DE LA SOCIÉTÉ IMPÉRIALE DES ANTIQUAIRES DE FRANCE, DES ANTIQUAIRES DE PICARDIE  
ET DE LA SOCIÉTÉ D'ÉMULATION D'ARRASVILLE



PARIS

IMPRIMERIE IMPÉRIALE

M DCCC LXIII

1063

pp. xxvi, 336

COLLECTION  
DE  
DOCUMENTS INÉDITS  
SUR L'HISTOIRE DE FRANCE,

PUBLIÉS PAR LES SOINS  
DU MINISTRE DE LINSTRUCTION PUBLIQUE.

---

PREMIÈRE SÉRIE.  
HISTOIRE LITTÉRAIRE.

cheval ne d'autre chose<sup>10</sup> ne l'en porroit garantir<sup>11</sup>, si giete emmi la voie, par où la beste<sup>12</sup> doit venir, plusors mireors<sup>13</sup>. Et quant la beste vient là et ele apercoit la figure et la semblance de son cors, ele cuide que ce soit ses filz<sup>14</sup>, si le torne<sup>15</sup> tant que ele le brise ; et quant ele voit que ce est neanz, puis s'en va outre, jusqu'à tant que ele<sup>16</sup> retrueve li autre mireor<sup>17</sup>, et garde et regarde<sup>18</sup>, por la pitié de ses filz<sup>19</sup>, or à l'un, or à l'autre, tant que li veneor<sup>20</sup> s'en vont à sauveté.

CC. — De la Taupe<sup>1</sup>.

Taupe est une diverse<sup>2</sup> beste, qui va tozjors desouz terre et<sup>3</sup> chieve en diverses parties, et manjue les racines que ele trueve, jà soit ce que li plusor dient que ele vit<sup>4</sup> seulement de terre.

Et sachiez que taupe ne voit goute, car nature ne volt<sup>5</sup> pas ovrir la pel<sup>6</sup> qui est sor ses oiz, et ainsi ne valent il neant, porce que il ne sont descouvert.

CCL. — De<sup>1</sup> l'Unicorne.

Unicorne est une<sup>2</sup> fiere beste, auques ressemblables à cheval de son cors, mais il a piez d'olifant et coe de cerf, et sa voiz est fierement espoentable, et emni<sup>3</sup> sa teste est une cornes anz plus de mervilleuse resplandissor<sup>4</sup>, qui a bien .iiij. piez de lone, mais ele est si fors et si aguë, que il perce legierement quanque il ataint.

<sup>10</sup> Beste, œ. — <sup>11</sup> Garrir, k. — <sup>12</sup> Vient, a, d, k, y, œ. — <sup>13</sup> Les uns c'd et les autres là [l'un... l'autre, y]; et quant la tigre voit sa ymage [s'ymage, a, k; se ymage, s; son, c, o] dedens les mireors, et apercoit, a, c, d, k, o, r, s, y, œ, a 3. — <sup>14</sup> Faons, n, k. — <sup>15</sup> Et re-torne or avant, or arrieres, mais ce est, o, r. — <sup>16</sup> a, k; il, f. — <sup>17</sup> a, c, d, k, o, r, s, y, œ; mireor, inq. r. — <sup>18</sup> Deden, a, k; et por la pitié que il a de son fils, regarde l'un, regarde l'autre, et tant demore ensint que li veneires s'en vel, o, k. — <sup>19</sup> Puis al un, et puis, d, s. — <sup>20</sup> Chacieres, s'en passe, k, y, p 2; veneour sont outre passé, d, s.

<sup>1</sup> a; Tarpe, r. — <sup>2</sup> Petite, a, c, k, r, t. — <sup>3</sup> La cherille, c, o, a, y, œ, a 3; care, a. — <sup>4</sup> De pure terre, k. — <sup>5</sup> a 3; vost, r; ne veult mie, r 2. — <sup>6</sup> a, c, k, y, a 3, r 2; piau, r.

<sup>1</sup> a, k, r, œ, p 2; Ci dit, p. — <sup>2</sup> Beste multi fiere, k. — <sup>3</sup> r, y, œ, a 3; forment espoen-table et en miliu, k; espoentable et amni, r. — <sup>4</sup> Resplendor, r, œ; resplendour, k; resplen-dor, o; resplendisseur, c.

Et sachiez que unicorn est si aspres et si fiers, que nus ne le puet penre ne ataindre<sup>5</sup> par nul engin<sup>6</sup>; ocis puet il bien estre, mais vif ne le puet on avoir. Et neporquant li veneor envoient une<sup>7</sup> vierge pucele cele part où l'unicorn converse; car ce est sa nature que maintenant s'en va à la pucele tout droit<sup>8</sup>, et depose<sup>9</sup> toutes fertez et s'en dort soef el giron à la pucele; et en ceste maniere le decoivent li veneor.

CCII. — De<sup>1</sup> l'Ours.

Ours a molt foible<sup>2</sup> chief, mais sa force est es jambes<sup>3</sup>, et por ce va il sovent tout droit<sup>4</sup> en estant.

Et sachiez que quant ours est deshaitiés<sup>5</sup> de cop ou de maladie, il<sup>6</sup> manjue une herbe qui a non flonius, qui le<sup>7</sup> garist; mais, s'il manjue pomes<sup>8</sup> de mandragore, à morir li convient, se ne fussent formies que il<sup>9</sup> manjue contre celui mal. Miel manjue<sup>10</sup> volentiers sor toutes autres choses. Et sa nature<sup>11</sup> est que<sup>12</sup> il eschaufe sa luxure, et gisent ensemble comme li home<sup>13</sup> gisent avec les femeles, et engendrent filz<sup>14</sup> lesquex ele ne porte que .xxx. jors. Et por<sup>15</sup> la briété dou tens, nature n'a pooir d'acomplir la forme de eus ne la facon ou ventre lor mere, ains naist<sup>16</sup> une piece de char blance sanz nule figure<sup>17</sup>, fors tant que il i a .ij. oilz. Et neporquant la mere la conforme<sup>18</sup> et adresce à sa langue, selonc la semblance de soi, et puis l'estraint à son piz por li doner chalor et esperit de vie. Et endementiers<sup>19</sup> s'en dort la mere bien .xvij. jors sanz boivre et sanz mangier, si<sup>20</sup> forment que on la porroit batre

<sup>5</sup> Ataindre ne prendre, A, C, O, R, Y, A 3. — <sup>6</sup> Ou laz dou monde, A, C, K, O, R, Y, OE. —

<sup>7</sup> Garce virge pucelle, T, A 3. — <sup>8</sup> En son giron, et lait ester toute sa ferteit; et en. K. —

<sup>9</sup> Toute fieresse, et se dort soevrement et seur [asseur, OE] en son sein et en ses dras, et en, B, Y, OE.

<sup>10</sup> A; Ci dit, F. — <sup>11</sup> Floibe, K. — <sup>12</sup> Et est lons, Y, OE. — <sup>13</sup> A, K, Y, OE; cle sovant toute droite, R. — <sup>14</sup> A, K, Y; ourse est deshaitiée, F. — <sup>15</sup> K; ele, V. — <sup>16</sup> Maine à garison, K; le conduit. R, Y, OE. — <sup>17</sup> A, K, R, Y; point, F. — <sup>18</sup> Y, OE; freni que ele, F. — <sup>19</sup> C, R; les cinq mots qui précédent niquq. F. — <sup>20</sup> Si est tele que quant il eschaufe de luxure il, A, K. — <sup>21</sup> Telle que en yver eschaufe, O, R. — <sup>22</sup> Font, O, R. — <sup>23</sup> Que la femele ne, A, O, R, Y, OE. — <sup>24</sup> Ce que le termine est si court, K. — <sup>25</sup> Comme, A, K. — <sup>26</sup> A 3; for, F; del monde, sauf .ij. eus, A, K. — <sup>27</sup> O, Y, A 3; conferme, F; forme et drece, K: — <sup>28</sup> Se dort, O, Y. — <sup>29</sup> Fermement, A, K, O, R.

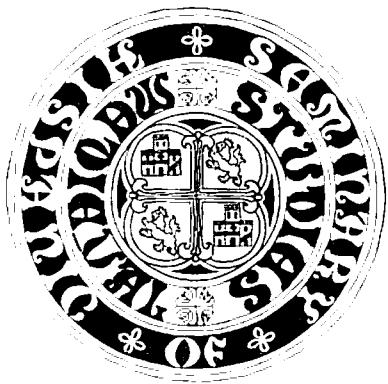
Brunetto Latini

*Libro del tesoro*

Versión castellana de *Li Livres dou Tresor*

Edición y estudio de

Spurgeon Baldwin



Madison, 1989

la figure et la samblance de son cors], cuya que sea su fijo, & desque torna el espejo & vee que non es nada, va adelante fasta que falla otro espejo, & va asi deteniendose de uno en otro, en manera que se va el caçador con sus hijos en salvo.

#### (54a) Capitulo 197: Del topo

Topo es una [+; pequeña] bestia que anda so tierra, & cava a muchas partes, & come las rayzes que falla, maguer que algunos dizen que non come al si non tierra. & non vee, ca la natura non le quigo descobrir los ojos, & por ende non les valen nada, pues que non son descobiertos.

#### Capitulo 198: Del unicornio

Unicornio es una bestia muy cruel, & semeja ya quanto al cavallo en el cuerpo, mas a los pics de elefante & la cola de ciervo, & la boz del es muy espantosa. Et en medio de la cabeza tiene un cuerno non mas, que echa gran claridat, & que a bien quatro pies en luengo; & es atan fuerte & atan agudo que pasa muy ligeramente que quier en que fiere. {2}Et sabet que unicornio es tan fuerte & tan cruel que ninguno non le puede alcançar nin tomar con engaño: bien le pueden matar, mas nunca lo pueden tomar bivo. Pero los caçadores que lo quieren tomar bivo toman una donzella virgen muy fermosa & ponenla ally do el suele andar; et el por su natura, dexando toda crueldat, echase en el regaço de la donzella & aduermese muy seguro, & en esta manera le engañan los caçadores.

#### Capitulo 199: Del osso

Osso a muy flaca cabeza, & es muy fuerte en las piernas; & es luengo, pero anda enfiesto en los pies de tras muchas veces. Et quando es doliente de frio<sup>554</sup> o de enfermedat, come una yerva que a nonbre flonyo, & guaresce; mas sy come las mançanas de la mandragula, morrie, si non come muy de buena mente las formigas sobre las otras cosas. {2}Et quando engendran jazen en uno commo el onbre & la muger; et (54b) la senbra non trae mas de treynta dias, & por el abreviamiento del tiempo la natura non puede complir en ellas la forma que devan aver en el vientre de su madre, ante nasce una pieça de

carne blanca sin ninguna figura, si non que a dos ojos. & entonç la madre formala & endresçela con su lengua segund la su semejança, & despues aprietal a sus pechos por le dar calentura & espiritu de vida. {3}& en esta guisa se adormeç, & duerme bien catorze dias syn comer & syn bever, tan fuerte que la podrias [+fr: batre ou] matar ante que despertase. & en esta manera esta la madre con sus hijos muy privadamente & mucho ascondida quatro meses; et por ende quando ellos salen de sus cuevas an los ojos asi tenebrosos que non veen sy non poco. & desta bestia dizen muchos que engruessa & se faze fermosa con feridas.

#### Capitulo 200: Aqui fenesç el primero libro del Tesoro

Aqui fenesç la primera partida deste libro, en que departe brevemente la generacion del mundo & el començamiento de los reyes de la tierra & los establecimientos de la una ley & de la otra & la natura de las cosas del cielo & de la tierra & la antiguedat de las viejas estorias & cuenta brevemente la natura de cada una [destas cosas], ca sy [+fr: li maistres] quigiere mas complidamente contar por que & commo acaesçen, seric el libro [atan grande que] non avrie fin, por que convernie a contar todas las artes & toda la filosofia. {2}Et por esso vos fue dicho en el començamiento de la primera partida deste libro del Thesoro que era asy commo dineros contados. Et asy commo las gentes non podrien comprar nin vender<sup>555</sup> sus mercaderias sin moneda, bien asy non podrien saber la certedunbre de las cosas humanales si non sopesien esta (54c) primera partida deste libro. {3}Mas agora dexa de fablar de theorica, que es la primera esçiençia de filosofia, et torna a las otras sçiençias, que son practica & logica, para ayuntar la segunda partida del Thesoro, que deve ser de las piedras preçiosas [& encerrar toda la primera partida del Thesoro].

SEQUITUR ULTRA & cetera.

FENIDA

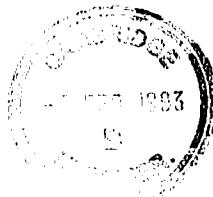
<sup>554</sup> fr: cop

<sup>555</sup> comprar nin vender; fr: chevir lor besoignes

Brunetto Latini  
*The Book of the Treasure*  
(*Li Livres dou Tresor*)

translated by  
PAUL BARRETTE  
and  
SPURGEON BALDWIN

Volume 90  
Series B  
GARLAND LIBRARY OF MEDIEVAL LITERATURE



Garland Publishing, Inc.  
New York & London  
1993

#### 192. The manticore

The manticore is an animal which lives in that same country. It has a man's face and is of the color of blood, its eyes and legs and body are like a lion's, and it has the tail of a scorpion. It runs so fast that no animal can escape from it. Its favorite food is human flesh. In sexual union sometimes the one is on top and sometimes the other.

#### 193. The panther

The panther is an animal with little black and white rings, like little eyes, and it is loved by all animals except the dragon. Its nature is such that as soon as it has caught food, it goes into its cave and sleeps for three days. Then it gets up and opens its mouth, and its breath is so sweet and pleasant that all animals which smell it go towards it, except the dragon, which, because of the smell, hides in openings underground out of fear, for it knows well that it will die. 2. You should know that in its whole life the panther has offspring only once, and you will hear how this happens. Its young, when they are full-grown in the womb, do not wait for normal birth; rather they impatiently break through their mother's insides and come out in such a way that the mother can never again conceive from the male's seed.

#### 194. The paranda

The paranda is a beast in Ethiopia as large as an ox and with a head and horns like a deer and the color of a bear. But the Ethiopians say it changes its color into a worse one, depending on the color of the thing it is closest to. This is also what octopuses in the sea and chameleons on land do, as was mentioned above.

#### 195. The monkey

The monkey is an animal which gladly imitates what it sees men doing. It becomes happy with the new moon, but when the moon is full it becomes sorrowful and is overcome by great melancholy. 2. You should know that the monkey has two offspring, one of which it loves so tenderly that it always carries it in its arms, and it dislikes the other one so much that it does not want to see it in front of it, so that the little one has to stay behind, clutching its mother's back. Then the hunter comes

through the woods, and the monkey is more afraid for itself than for its young, and it abandons the one it loves most, to free its hands, and it escapes along with the less-loved offspring, which is holding on to its mother's back so tightly that it is as if it were tied on. The Ethiopians say that in their land there are monkeys of different sorts, but the narrative will not speak of them beyond what it has already said.

#### 196. The tiger

The tiger is an animal born more frequently in Hyrcania than in any other place, and it is covered with spots of diverse colors. Without doubt, the tiger is one of the fastest animals in the world, and it is of such great ferociousness that men do not have the courage to attack it or to face it. If someone were to ask me what I mean when I say that tigers are caught by men, I would say that they are caught in this way: when it happens that the tiger has cubs, it strays away from its cave to look for food for them. Then the hunters come to steal the little ones, and when they have done this and the tiger returns and finds the nest empty, it follows all the tracks of the hunter carrying off the cubs. Fearing the tiger's cruelty, knowing that even fleeing on a horse or some other animal he could not escape, in the middle of the road he is traveling on he puts some mirrors, some here, some there, and when the tiger sees its image in the mirror and notices its shape, it thinks it sees its cubs. Then it turns around and around, going forward and backward, but it does no good, and then it proceeds further until it comes to another mirror, and because of its concern for its cubs, it looks from one mirror to another, and it spends so much time doing this that the hunters get away safely.

#### 197. The mole

The mole is a little animal which always goes underground and digs it out here and there, and eats the roots it comes across, although many say that it lives off earth alone. But you should know that a mole can scarcely see, for nature did not want to open up the skin covering its eyes, and so its eyes are useless because they are not uncovered.

#### 198. The unicorn

The unicorn is a fierce animal whose body resembles the horse's somewhat, but it has feet like an elephant and the tail of a deer, and its

voice is tremendously scary, and in the middle of its forehead there grows a single horn which shines marvellously; and it is easily four feet long, and is so strong and so sharp that it easily pierces whatever it strikes. 2. You should know that the unicorn is so tough and so wild that no one can overtake it or capture it with any snare in the world. Dead, it could very well be caught by a man, but not alive. Hunters send a virgin maiden to the area the unicorn frequents, for its nature is that it goes right away to the maiden, casts aside its fierceness and sweetly falls asleep on her bosom and in her clothes, and in this way the hunters trick it.

#### 199. The bear

The bear is an animal with a very weak head, but its strength is in its legs, and for this reason it often moves about standing straight upright. You should know that when the bear is suffering because of a blow or a sickness, it eats an herb called flomus, which brings it back to health, but if it eats the fruit of the mandrake, it will inevitably die, if it were not for the ants it eats to protect it from this. It likes to eat honey more than anything else. 2. Their nature is such that in the wintertime they are sexually aroused, and lie together the way men and women do, and they produce cubs, which the female carries only 30 days. And because of the shortness of the time, nature does not have the time or the power to complete the form inside of the mother's body, so a piece of white flesh is born without any shape whatever, aside from the fact that it has two eyes; and yet the mother forms it and arranges it with its tongue in its own shape, and then it hugs it to its breast to give it warmth and the breath of life. 3. Then the mother sleeps a good 14 days without drinking or eating, so deeply that one could beat it and kill it before it would wake up. In this way the mother stays with the cub for a good four months, and hidden away, and as a result its eyes are so dim that it can barely see anything when it comes out of its cave. People say about this animal that it gets fat and healthy from being beaten.

#### 200. Here ends the first part of the *Treasure*.

Here ends the first part of the *Treasure*, which briefly tells of the creation of the world, and the beginning of kings, and the establishment of the one law and the other, and the nature of heavenly and earthly

things, and the nature of ancient histories, and it briefly tells about each one. For if the master had wished to write more extensively and give details on the origin and development of things, this book would have been endless, for then it would be necessary to treat all the arts and all the philosophies. 2. For this reason the master says that the first part of his *Treasure* is like cash money, for just as people could not carry out their business or undertake commercial transactions without money, in the same way they could not know the certainty of human things if they did not know what this first part tells. 3. But here the master will cease speaking of what belongs to the theoretical branch of knowledge, which is the first science of the body of philosophy, and he will go back to the other two sciences, that is, the practical and the logical ones, to compile the second part of his *Treasure*, which will be about precious stones.

Here ends the first part, that is, the first book of the *Treasure* which was done by Master Brunetto Latini of Florence.

Praise to God. Amen. Amen. Amen.

## Introduction

It is fair to say that the name of Brunetto Latini will be familiar to most modern readers only because he was Dante's teacher; in the well-known passage in Canto 15 of the *Inferno* Dante remembers him with affection, but nevertheless condemns him to suffer among the Sodomites. The actual nature of his transgression has long been a matter of controversy, but we will not attempt to deal with the history of scholarly speculation here, and there is very little material in *The Book of the Treasure* which could conceivably shed any light on the subject. There is nothing, in fact, aside from a couple of very brief observations as to the ugly nature of the Sin (such as Book II.33.1, where a somewhat opaque passage tells us that "lying with a male" is to be condemned as worse than adultery). In the anecdote about Pericles and Sophocles as governors (Book II.75.2), Sophocles' admiration for a handsome young man was said to be inappropriate, not in itself, but coming from the mouth of a governor; Brunetto goes on to observe that such a remark would be appropriate if made during after-dinner conversation, but it would be indeed stretching matters to argue that this constitutes any kind of expression of approval on Brunetto's part.

On the other hand, we have ample evidence of Brunetto's long career as a respected public figure in his native Florence. We know that he was born into an influential family around the year 1220, that he was married and was the father of a daughter and two sons, and that he held the important position of "rhetorician," that is, notary; we see his name on official documents as early as the year 1254. Evidence of his importance in Florentine affairs is the diplomatic mission on which he was sent in 1260, as a representative of the communal government of Florence to the court of Alfonso X. It was the intent of the Guelph party to seek help from the Wise King against the aggression of Frederick II's son Manfred and the Sienese Ghibellines. We know almost nothing of exactly how Brunetto was involved in the politics, and of the voyage itself we know only what the few details given in his book called *Tesoretto* tell us. It was on the return trip that Brunetto learned of the disastrous defeat of the Guelphs by Manfred's army at the battle of Montaperti, on September 4,

1260, and of his own exile from Florence (his name appears on a list of exiled persons dated in that same month of September), whereupon he crossed the Pyrenees into France, where he was to spend the next seven years; during these years his name is recorded in several documents locating him in Arras and Bar-sur-Aube, where he evidently was one of a group of exiles in French territory, and where he composed *The Book of the Treasure* for an unknown benefactor. Following the defeat of the Ghibellines and the death of Mansfred at Benevento in February of 1266, he returned to Italy, possibly in Charles of Anjou's retinue, which reached Florence in the spring of 1267 (Davidsohn, among others, holds the opinion that Brunetto returned in Charles' company). From 1272 to 1274 he was Chancellor, and thereafter he continued to be active politically almost until his death in 1294. In 1284, for example, he was President of the League of Florence, Genoa and Lucca against Pisa, and in 1287 he held the position of Prior. (For further biographical details, see Sundby or the introductions to the Chabaille and Carmody editions of the original French *Livres dou Tresor*).

#### Brunetto's works

As a literary figure, Brunetto was the author of the *Rettorica*, a translation into Italian of Cicero's *De Inventione*, with commentary, later reworked for the rhetorical section of *The Book of the Treasure*; the *Tesoretto* (*Little Treasure*), an allegorical, didactic dream vision in verse, in the spirit of Guillaume de Lorris' *Romance of the Rose*, in which the figures of Natura and Philosophy dispense instruction on various topics useful to the citizens of the country; and a letter to a friend, the *Favolello*, a poetic epistle discussing letter-writing and friendship. Finally, Brunetto translated several of Cicero's orations.

*The Book of the Treasure* is a compendium of primarily classical material, following in a long tradition of such collections, with origins in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, a genre which was finally to die in the Renaissance, when especially the scientific knowledge contained in these pale and corrupt reflections of classical wisdom could no longer compete with the superior scientific material from the Muslim world which began to make its way into Christian Europe as early as the 11th century. The most important of these traditional compilations were those of Cassiodorus, Boethius, and especially Martianus Capella; the crucial roles played by Martianus and Cassiodorus have perhaps not been

exaggerated by modern scholars: "If Martianus Capella had been forgotten . . . there would have been no chance of a revival of learning" (W.P. Ker, *The Dark Ages*, Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1904, p. 26); "but for Cassiodorus it is quite possible that no Latin Classic except the works of Virgil would have come down to us in complete form" (Montague Rhodes James, "Learning and Literature till the Death of Bede," in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. J.B. Bury et al., III, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922, pp. 485-513, at p. 486). Modern evaluation is, however, drastically divided: while there is a general acknowledgement of their role in the preservation of certain elements of classical culture, especially in the case of Isidore of Seville, witness in contrast the following characterization of Martianus in a well-known history of Latin literature of the Middle Ages: "the dullest and poorest stuff imaginable" (H.J. Rose, *A Handbook of Latin Literature*, London, 1936, rpt. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1960, p. 458).

But in the 13th century they are in fact virtually dead. How, then, can the popularity of the *Treasure* of Brunetto be explained in the very twilight of the life of such compendia, which after nearly a millennium of popularity in Latin were about to be abandoned completely? The most obvious answer is that for the first time we see such a work written in a vernacular language; another key to the special popularity seems to be associated with Brunetto's skillfully organized plan (in this we can draw a parallel with the *Etymologies* of Isidore and the *Wedding of Philology and Mercury* of Martianus Capella), but the most compelling reason would have to be the venerable and unassailable authority of Brunetto's sources.

#### The Plan of *The Book of the Treasure*

The first section of the book, dedicated to what Brunetto calls "wisdom," is based on the ultimate authority, the Holy Scriptures themselves; after this comes historical material from Solinus and others, a version of the ubiquitous *Mappamundi*, and finally a version of the ancient *Physiologus*, called *Bestiary* in the late Middle Ages, which occupies one-third of the chapters in Book I. The bulk of the second book rests on no less an authority than Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and this is followed by aphorisms from Solomon, Seneca, Jesus Sidrach and a host of others. The first part of the third book he devotes to rhetoric, based on the *De Inventione* of Cicero. The final section, on the