

Etymology in the Most Important Reference Encyclopedia of Late Antiquity (ca. 600 CE)

Isidore of Seville, Etymologies

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Isidore of Seville was born in the Carthaginensis (the region centering on Cartagena, Spain) around 560 and died in 636 in Hispalis (the future Seville), where he had been appointed bishop in 600 or 601 as a successor to his elder brother Leander.^{1,2} The author of a host of diverse works (exegetic, historical, grammatical), he completed in 633 his *opus magnum*, which had been encouraged by the king of Visigothic Spain Sisebut (612–621), a treatise under the title *Etymologiae* (*Etymologies*) which is in fact an all-encompassing Latin encyclopedia providing a summa of knowledge in different areas. This is apparent from the book titles, which range from *Grammar* to *God, Angels and Saints* (both in our excerpts). One of these, Book 10 (*On words*)—possibly originally conceived as an independent work³—is a proto-dictionary with entries ordered by the initial letter (though not in strictly alphabetical order), and linguistic topics take center stage in this work in many respects, as shown by the fact that the section on *Grammar* is Book 1, and that etymology is omnipresent, and therefore promoted to the title. Indeed, Isidore’s work testifies to the view, widespread in his age and later, that words are central to all human knowledge and hence that to understand their true source and meaning is to grasp all that humans can know. In all of his discussions on whatever matters, in fact, Isidore presents the etymology of basic technical terms of the relevant discipline, as seen, for instance, in the opening of Book 3 (*On Mathematics*), excerpted in what follows. His views on language and etymology depend on the classical Latin tradition, represented in this chapter by Varro—as is made clear in the commentary to the etymologies selected in our excerpts. They were to influence medieval culture, for which the etymological method was the one passed on by Isidore, as exem-

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- 1 Thanks to Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann for her suggestions and remarks. Usual disclaimers apply.
 - 2 Biographical information on Isidore is provided by Fontaine, *Isidore*, 5–9; Fontaine, *Genèse et originalité*, 85–143; and Castellanos, “Historical Contexts.”
 - 3 See Elfassi, “Isidore of Seville,” 247 (and the previous literature cited there).

plified for the transmission of the etymology of *vulpes* “fox” in the introduction on Hugutio (see Chapter 2.9), where the latter’s treatment is compared with Varro’s and Isidore’s.

Alongside what in ancient culture was labelled etymology—though modern linguistics would not recognize it as such (see Chapter 2.1)—the other pillar of Isidore’s treatment of language is derivation from grammatically related words. As seen in Chapter 2.4, language professionals from antiquity commented on transparent formal connections among formally related words. Isidore too comments extensively on this, though his conclusions are often not ours, as seen in the passage on *sapientia* excerpted below (*Etymologies* 10.1): “*sapiens* a *sapientia* nominetur, quia prius *sapientia*, deinde *sapiens*” (*sapiens* “a wise person” is called from *sapientia* “wisdom,” because first comes wisdom, then a wise person). Morphologically, it is indeed the other way round: *sapientia* is the derivative.

The thousand or so extant manuscripts of the *Etymologies* attest to the tremendous impact of the work, which was *the* reference work of the Middle Ages (far beyond etymology). In the early fourteenth century Isidore was still an undisputed luminary for Dante, who mentions him in his *Paradise* (10.130–132), but slightly over one century later, he was harshly dismissed by the founder of modern western philology, Lorenzo Valla (in the preface to Book 11 of his *De linguae Latinae elegantia* [*On the Elegance of the Latin Language*], 1444), as the “first and most arrogant of ignoramuses, who does not know anything and nonetheless teaches about everything” (*primus est Hisidorus indoctorum arrogantissimus, qui cum nihil sciat omnia praecipit. Opera omnia* I 41).⁴

Isidore’s language usage and practices have to be seen against the background of his social and historical context. He was born in the Carthaginensis as a subject of the emperor Justinian slightly after the Byzantine reconquest of southern Spain from the Visigoths. This became the Empire’s *provincia Spaniae* in 552, to which Cartagena belonged until the province disappeared in 625 owing to the Visigothic *Reconquista*, whereas Hispalis was taken back by the Visigothic king Liuvigild much earlier (571). Thus, Isidore’s active life and work were entirely under Visigothic rule, back in the political orbit of the party to which his father Severianus and his family belonged, which has been convinc-

4 This dismissal did not mean the end of his success, as witnessed by the 57 extant manuscripts from the fifteenth century as well as from the fact that the work was constantly reprinted since the onset of print (at least eight times within the fifteenth century; for this comment we are indebted to Cardelle de Hartmann): cf. van den Abeele, “La tradition manuscrite,” 199; Cardelle de Hartmann, “Uso y recepción,” 478; and Cardelle de Hartmann, “Glossaries and Source Material,” 2.

ingly argued to have had linguistic consequences.⁵ In fact, from what Isidore says of his sources and readings, it is clear that he had no first-hand knowledge of Greek himself. Now, while Greek was virtually absent from the linguistic landscape of third- to fifth-century Spain, the abovementioned historical facts show that in the sixth century—with Greek garrisons, officers, and merchants in southern Spain—he could have easily learnt it if he had wanted to do so, or could at least have contracted Greek-speaking collaborators, as other Latin scholars did, such as Martin of Braga, in nearby Lusitania, or, in Calabria one generation before him, Cassiodorus, whose *Institutiones* are the earlier encyclopedia that Isidore largely exploits and replaces.⁶ From this, Fontaine concluded that Isidore's disinterest in Greek might depend on political chauvinism and have been part of a hostile attitude towards Constantinople, which was at the time the enemy of Visigothic Spain and the advocate of heresies (such as monophysism).⁷ A man of his time, Isidore took sides also linguistically for the Visigothic kingdom, which inherited its power from the western Empire and, after the conversion from Arianism of king Reccared in 587 (prompted by bishop Leander, Isidore's brother), was the defender of Roman orthodoxy. In view of this fact, it is paradoxical, as remarked by B. Bischoff, that Isidore's etyma were the main source of information on Greek for the western Middle Ages in the centuries to come.⁸

We are thus left with Latin, and nothing else. Isidore's world is a strictly monolingual one,⁹ not only retrospectively, because he lacked first-hand active knowledge of the other languages of the Holy Scripture, but also prospectively, because at his time Latin was still a naturally acquired spoken language in common use at all levels of society, even if dramatically changed with respect to the language spoken throughout the western Empire some centuries earlier. This is evident, in his works, from many passages, e.g., where he speaks of how to preach to the unlearned (*Etymologies* 6.8.2) or where he uses *lingua nostra*, "our language" (*History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi* 2), referring to Latin in a context where he clearly has in mind all Spaniards, not just the

5 An in-depth scrutiny of Isidore's attitude towards Greek culture and language is to be found in Fontaine, *Isidore*, 846–854.

6 See Ribémont, *Les origines*. Martin of Braga (ca. 520–580) corresponded with Leander. Isidore praised his doctrine in the chapter he devotes to him in his treatise on literary history (*De viris illustribus* 22).

7 Fontaine, *Isidore*, 859. A biographical reason for this attitude may consist in the fact that the Byzantine conquest of southern Spain in 552 was possibly among the causes for Isidore's family fleeing from the Carthaginiensis (cf. Ubric Rabaneda, "Leander of Seville," 103–104).

8 Bischoff, "Das griechische Element in der abendländischen Bildung des Mittelalters," 30.

9 Banniard, *Viva voce*, 211.

learned.¹⁰ He was of course aware that his language had changed with respect to classical Latin, as he regards the language of his own time as a “fourth Latin,” which he himself calls “mixed”:

Latinas autem linguas quattuor esse quidam dixerunt, id est Priscam, Latinam, Romanam, Mixtam. ... Mixta, quae post imperium latius promotum, simul cum moribus et hominibus in Romanam ciuitatem inrupit, integritatem uerbi per soloecismos et barbarismos corrumpens.

Etymologies 9.1.6–7

Some have said that there are four varieties of Latin, that is, Ancient, Latin, Roman, and Mixed. ... Mixed, which emerged into the Roman state after the wider expansion of the Empire, along with new customs and peoples, corrupted the integrity of speech with solecisms and barbarisms.

In spite of these changes, the break between the vernaculars and Latin that led to the individuation of the Romance languages was still to come, starting in France around 700 CE.¹¹ Consequently, Isidore is linguistically and, in part, culturally at the end of western antiquity, in the same way as Visigothic society in his age was still in full continuity with the western Empire, on the eve of the epochal break determined by the Muslim conquest of northern Africa (late sixth century) and Spain (711–712 CE).¹² Culturally, though, he also represents at the same time the turning point away from antiquity, whose tradition culminates in Cassiodorus’s *Institutiones*, the life-long work of the Calabrian scholar (ca. 490–ca. 584) who served in Italy under Ostrogothic rule. While Cassiodorus knew Greek and still had the complete array of the literature from the Graeco-Roman tradition in his library, Isidore inaugurates the Western Middle Ages in a cultural sense, in that he selects the subset of Latin works and only Latin works that was to survive into western Medieval culture.

10 Banniard’s chapter on “Isidore de Séville et la recherche d’un équilibre stylistique” carefully sifts and discusses all the available evidence. Banniard, *Viva voce*, 181–251.

11 Herman, “The End of the History of Latin.”

12 A turning point in European history analyzed in historical masterpieces such as Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*; and McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*.

Latin Text

Excerpted from Isidore of Seville, *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi: Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. Wallace Martin Lindsay (Oxford University Press, 1911); square brackets in the original.

Excerpt 1: Liber 1. De grammatica

i. DE DISCIPLINA ET ARTE. 1. Disciplina a discendo nomen accepit: unde et scientia dici potest. Nam scire dictum a discere, quia nemo nostrum scit, nisi qui discit. Aliter dicta disciplina, quia discitur plena. 2. Ars vero dicta est, quod artis praeceptis regulisque consistat. Alii dicunt a Graecis hoc tractum esse vocabulum ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς, id est a virtute, quam scientiam vocaverunt.

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xxix. DE ETYMOLOGIA. 1. Etymologia est origo vocabulorum, cum vis verbi vel nominis per interpretationem colligitur. Hanc Aristoteles σύμβολον, Cicero adnotationem nominavit, quia nomina et verba rerum nota facit exemplo posito; utputa “flumen,” quia fluendo crevit, a fluendo dictum. 2. Cuius cognitio saepe usum necessarium habet in interpretatione sua. Nam dum videris unde ortum est nomen, citius vim eius intellegis. Omnis enim rei inspectio etymologia cognita planior est. Non autem omnia nomina a veteribus secundum naturam inposita sunt, sed quaedam et secundum placitum, sicut et nos servis et possessionibus interdum secundum quod placet nostrae voluntati nomina damus. 3. Hinc est quod omnium nominum etymologiae non reperiuntur,

13 For another translation, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. Barney.

14 This etymology appears in many passages of Augustine (cf. Spevak’s note on this passage in Isidore of Seville, *Étymologies. Livre 1*, ed. Spevak, 221). When it comes to modern science, *discere* has a well-established etymology from the PIE root **dek-* “to take, accept” (whence “take in,” though the morphological details are controversial: *EDL* 172), and is related to *doceo* “to teach” but, contrary to appearance, not to *discipulus* (from which *disciplina* derives, which has no relationship with *plenus* “full”), on whose etymon there is no consensus yet (different views in *LEW* 1.355 vs. *EDL* 172), the only sure thing being that a suffix *-pulus* cannot be justified, thus ruling out *disc(ere)* as an eligible derivation base.

English Translation

Translated by Glenn W. Most.¹³

Excerpt 1: Book 1. On Grammar

i. ON DISCIPLINE AND ART. 1. *Disciplina* [discipline] receives its name from *discere* [to learn], for which reason it can also be called *scientia* [knowledge]. Now *scire* [to know] is said from *discere*, because none of us knows anything unless he learns it. *Disciplina* is said in another way, because “it is learned fully” [*discitur plena*].¹⁴ 2. But *ars* [an art; genitive *artis*] is said because it is composed of strict [*artus*] precepts and rules. Others say this word [*vocabulum*] is derived by the Greeks from *aretê*, that is, “virtue,” which they called “knowledge.”¹⁵

...

xxix. ON ETYMOLOGY. 1. Etymology [*etymologia*] is the origin of words, when the meaning [*vis*]¹⁶ of a verb [*verbum*] or a noun [*nomen*]¹⁷ is inferred through interpretation. Aristotle called this a *sumbolon* [sign], and Cicero an *adnotatio* [annotation],¹⁸ because it makes known [*notus*] the nouns [*nomina*] and verbs [*verba*] for things by presenting an example: as for instance *flumen* [river], so called from *fluendum* [flowing] because it is by flowing [*fluendo*] that it has grown. 2. Knowing a word’s etymology is often indispensably useful for interpreting it, for when you have seen whence a word [*nomen*] has arisen, you more quickly understand its force [*vis*]. Indeed, the examination of any thing is clearer once its etymology is known. However, not all names [*nomina*] were applied by the ancients according to nature,¹⁹ but some also arbitrarily, just as we too sometimes give names [*nomina*] to our slaves and possessions according to what pleases our inclination. 3. This is why etymologies are not

15 *Ars* and *artus* both stem from the PIE root **h₂(e)r-* “to fit, join” (*EDL* 55f.), as does Gk. ἀρετή, whose etymon is uncertain, according to one proposal (Vine, *Aeolic ὄπρετον*, 61f.; *EDG* 128f.).

16 The term *vis* in Latin denotes the force or power of something; applied to a word, it signifies its meaning.

17 Both *verbum* and *nomen* can mean “word” in general; when they are opposed, the former means “verb” and the latter “noun” or “name.” Often it is not clear just what these terms mean.

18 The relevant passage in Cicero (*Topica* 35) actually has *notatio*, not *adnotatio* (cf. Isidore of Seville, *Étymologies. Livre 1*, ed. Spevak, 318).

19 Cf. Chapter 2.3.

quia quaedam non secundum qualitatem, qua genita sunt, sed iuxta arbitrium humanae voluntatis vocabula acceperunt. Sunt autem etymologiae nominum aut ex causa datae, ut “reges” a [regendo et] recte agendo, aut ex origine, ut “homo,” quia sit ex humo, aut ex contrariis ut a lavando “lutum,” dum lutum non sit mundum, et “lucus,” quia umbra opacus parum luceat. 4. Quaedam etiam facta sunt ex nominum derivatione, ut a prudentia “prudens”; quaedam etiam ex vocibus, ut a garrulitate “garrulus”; quaedam ex Graeca etymologia orta et declinata sunt in Latinum, ut “silva,” “domus.” 5. Alia quoque ex nominibus locorum, urbium, [vel] fluminum traxerunt vocabula. Multa etiam ex diversarum gentium sermone vocantur. Vnde et origo eorum vix cernitur. Sunt enim pleraque barbara nomina et incognita Latinis et Graecis.

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Excerpt II: Liber III. De mathematica

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iii. QUID SIT NUMERUS. 1. Numerus autem est multitudo ex unitatibus constituta. Nam unum semen numeri esse, non numerum. Numero nummus nomen dedit, et a sui frequentatione vocabulum indidit. Unus a Graeco nomen trahit; Graeci enim unum ἕνα dicunt ... 4. Dicti autem decem a Graeca ety-

20 Indeed, both *rex* and *rego* come from one PIE root **h₃reg-* “to rule, direct” (EDL 517, 522), and also *homo/humus* are rightly connected (an etymology already occurring in Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*, I 6, 34), the former having been labelled as PIE **d^hǵ^h(e)m-ōn* “earthling” (based on **d^hǵ^h-ōm* “earth”). By contrast, *lutum*, though resembling its passive perfect participle (*lautus* or *lotus*; and indeed, some editors read the latter, instead of *lutum*, in this passage: see Isidore of Seville, *Étymologies. Livre I*, ed. Spevak, 127, 320), has nothing to do with the verb *lavere* (< PIE **louh₃-* “to wash”), coming from PIE **l(H)u-to-* “dirt” (EDL 331, 355), the same root occurring in *pollutio* and hence in Eng. *pollution*. As for *lucus*, this explanation was popular in ancient Rome, though its success is first attested under the form of an unsympathetic rhetorical question in a passage of Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* (1.6.32–34) where he finds fault with the etymologists’ “hideous absurdities” (*foedissima ludibria*): “etiamne a contrariis aliqua sinemus trahi, ut *lucus*, quia umbra opacus parum luceat ...?” (Shall we even allow some words to be drawn from their opposites, like *lucus*, because, being opaque because of shade, it has little light ...?). The two words are indeed related, though not in that way, since *lucus* “sacred grove” stems from PIE **louk-o-* “light place” (EDL 350) and so must have developed its classical Latin meaning from that of “clearing (in the woods),” lost in Latin but preserved in cognates such as Old High German *lōh* “clearing”—occurring e.g., as a second stem in the compound Germanic place name *Waterloo*.

found for all words, because some received their designations [*vocabula*] not according to their innate quality but in consequence of the arbitrariness of human inclination. Moreover, etymologies of words [*nomina*] are given either from their cause, like *reges* [kings] from [*regendum* (ruling) and] *recte agendum* [acting rightly]; or from their origin, like *homo* [human] because he comes from the earth [*humus*], or from contraries, like *lutum* [mud] from *lavando* [washing], since mud is not clean, and *lucus* [grove], because it is only slightly illuminated [*luceat*] since it is darkened by its shadiness.²⁰ 4. Some too are made by derivation from nouns [*nomina*], like *prudens* [prudent] from *prudentia* [prudence]; some from sounds [*vores*],²¹ like *garrulus* [talkative] from *garrulitas* [talkativeness]; some have arisen from a Greek etymology and have a Latin declension, like *silva* [forest], *domus* [house].²² 5. And others have derived their designations [*vocabula*] from the names [*nomina*] of places, cities, [or] rivers. Furthermore, many are so called from the languages of different peoples. For this reason, their origin can scarcely be recognized. Indeed, there are many foreign words [*nomina*] that are not understood by speakers of Latin and Greek.

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Excerpt II: Book III. On Mathematics

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iii. WHAT A NUMBER IS. 1. Now a number is a multitude that is composed of units [*unitas*]. For “one” is the seed of number, not a number itself.²³ The term “coin” [*nummus*] gave its name [*nomen*] to “number” [*numerus*] and it applied this name [*vocabulum*] because of its frequent usage. “One” [*unus*] derives its name [*nomen*] from Greek; for the Greeks call one ἕνα ...²⁴ 4. Now “ten” is

21 The term *vox* can mean “word” or “sound” in general (see Schad, *Lexicon*, 428–429); often it is not clear just which is meant.

22 Neither *silva* nor *domus* come from Greek, and while the latter has a Greek cognate (δῶμος “house”), the etymology of *silva* is obscure, since the link once assumed to its Greek synonym ὕλη is no longer accepted (*EDL* 1530). As for the adjective to abstract noun relationship, the direction of derivation is actually the reverse, here and elsewhere, than the one assumed by Isidore.

23 The definition comes from the mathematician Nicomachus of Gerasa (ca. 60–ca. 120 CE) via Cassiodorus and Boethius. See Fontaine, *Isidore*, 356 f.

24 Latin *unus* is indeed etymologically related to Greek οὔνη “one (at dice),” whereas Greek εἰς shares the same IE origin with Latin *sin(guli)* “one each,” *sem(el)* “once,” *sim(plex)* “simple.”

mologia, eo quod ligent et coniungant infra iacentes numeros. Nam δεσμός coniungere vel ligare apud eos dicitur. ... 5. Centum vero vocati a cantho, quod est circulum ...

Excerpt III: Liber VII. De deo, angelis et sanctis

i. DE DEO. 1. Beatissimus Hieronymus, vir eruditissimus et multarum linguarum peritus, Hebraeorum nominum interpretationem primus in Latinam linguam convertit. Ex quibus pro brevitate praetermissis multis quaedam huic operi adiectis interpretationibus interponenda studui. 2. Vocabulorum enim expositio satis indicat quid velit intellegi. Habent enim quaedam ex propriis causis nominum rationem. In principio autem decem nomina ponimus, quibus apud Hebraeos Deus vocatur. 3. Primum apud Hebraeos Dei nomen El dicitur; quod alii Deum, alii etymologiam eius exprimentes ἰσχυρός, id est fortem interpretati sunt, ideo quod nulla infirmitate opprimitur, sed fortis est et sufficiens ad omnia perpetranda. 4. Secundum nomen Eloī. 5. Tertium Eloē, quod utrumque in Latino Deus dicitur. Est autem nomen in Latinum ex Graeca appellatione translatum. Nam Deus Graece δέος, φόβος dicitur, id est timor, unde tractum est Deus, quod eum colentibus sit timor. 6. Deus autem proprie nomen est Trinitatis pertinens ad Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum. Ad

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- 25 Lat. *decem* and Greek δέκα “ten” are related (PIE **dekm*), while δεσμός is related to neither.
- 26 Though less transparently than for *decem*/δέκα, here too, as in general, Latin and Greek numerals are etymologically related (Lat. *centum* = Gk. ἑκατόν < PIE **dekm̥tom*, probably in turn derived from “ten”), while *canthus* is an unrelated Hellenism from a Greek word of unclear origin (unrelated to the numerals).
- 27 Just as for Greek (see introduction), Isidore had no first-hand knowledge of Hebrew and depends for information on his sources (a handy list in Fontaine, *Genèse et originalité*, 183), in particular the commentaries on the holy Scripture by Jerome (ca. 347–420)—who translated the bible into Latin (the *Vulgata*) from both Greek and Hebrew—whom he duly credits at the outset (7.1.1). The list of names starting with *El* depends on Jerome’s letter 25 to Marcella *De X Dei nominibus* (On the ten names of God; edn. *CSEL* 54, 218–220; *ML* 22, 428–430), written in 383–384 CE. Jerome comments on the two Greek translations of Hebrew *’el* (’ֵל) occurring in Psalm 90 (Vulgata = 91); that is, “God” in the Septuagint vs. ἰσχυρόν “strong” in Aquila of Sinope (early second century CE). Also, the remark that the latter expresses the etymology of God’s name comes straight from Jerome: *Aquila ἐτυμολογίαν, eius exprimens ἰσχυρόν, id est, fortem interpretatur*. The adjective ἰσχυρός often occurs in the Bible as an epithet of God, also in coordination with “terrible” (see fn. 29): e.g., Deut. 10:17, Neh. 1:5; 9:32. On the formulaic coordination ἰσχυρός καὶ φοβερός see Reiterer, “Praying to God Passionately,” 128.

said from a Greek etymology, because it binds and conjoins the numbers lying below it. For δεσμός [bond] means to conjoin or to bind among them.²⁵ ... 5. But “one hundred” [centum] is so called from *canthus* [iron wheel-tire] because it is circular. ...²⁶

Excerpt III: Book VII. On God, Angels, and Saints

i. ON GOD. 1. The most blessed Jerome, a most erudite man and one who was skilled in many languages, was the first person to translate the signification of Hebrew names [*nomina*] into the Latin language. Out of these I have omitted many for the sake of brevity, but I have taken care to insert some of these into this work together with their significations. 2. Indeed, an explanation of the words [*vocabula*] indicates sufficiently what it means, for some possess the reason for their names out of their own causes. In the beginning, therefore, we set down the ten names [*nomina*] by which God is called among the Hebrews. 3. The first name of God among the Hebrews is spoken as *El*, which some have translated as “God,” and others, expressing its etymology, as ἰσχυρός, that is, “strong,” since he is oppressed by no weakness but is strong and capable of accomplishing all things.²⁷ 4. The second name, *Eloi*. 5. The third, *Eloe*, either of which is said in Latin as *Deus* [God].²⁸ Now the name [*nomen*] *Deus* in Latin has been transferred from a Greek appellation, for *Deus* is said in Greek as δέος, φόβος, that is, “fear,” from which *Deus* is drawn, because those who worship him should have fear.²⁹ 6. Moreover *Deus* [God] is properly the name of the Trinity,

28 Here, Jerome has *Deinde eloim et eloe*. The former is Hebrew *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) “God,” with a plural suffix *-im*. This noun’s paradigm has two forms without a final *-m*—spelled identically in Hebrew (אֱלֹהִי, <’lhy>) but vocalized, and hence pronounced, differently—which may lie behind the two variants presented as two different names by Isidore (*Eloi* and *Eloe*). One is אֱלֹהָי *elohay* (’ēlohāy) “my God” (e.g. Joshua 9:23), which in Mark’s gospel (Marc. 15:34) is spelled *Eloi* (in the Greek original, Ἐλωϊ, as opposed to Ἠλί in Matth. 27:47 which reflects singular אֱלֹהִי “my God”). The other *m*-less form is אֱלֹהֵי *elohe(y)* (’ēlohē-), the so-called construct state, occurring when preceding a determination, as in *Elohe elo-him* (אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, the God of gods, the supreme God) in Deut. 10:17; Ps. 136:2. This is the background of Guillaumin’s remark: “Une grande confusion régnait dans ce domaine, du fait que les formes déclinées de l’hébreu étaient considérées comme différentes les unes des autres” (Much confusion reigned in this area, as the inflected forms of Hebrew were considered to be different from one another). Isidore of Seville, *Étymologies. Livre VII*, ed. Guillaumin, 151. In reporting this, Isidore relies on Jerome, just as usual.

29 While φοβερός “terrible” is a frequent epithet of God (see fn. 27), neither its root nor δέος “fear” have anything to do with Lat. *deus* etymologically. Rather, δέος is an abstract noun from δέιδω “to fear” (EDL 308), ultimately going back to PIE **duwo* “two.”

quam Trinitatem etiam reliqua quae in Deo infra sunt posita vocabula referuntur ...

Excerpt IV: Liber x. De vocabulis

1. ORIGO quorundam nominum, id est unde veniant, non pene omnibus patet. Proinde quaedam noscendi gratia huic operi interiecimus.

DE QUIBUSDAM VOCABVLIS HOMINVM. Licet origo nominum, unde veniant, a philosophis eam teneat rationem, ut per denominationem homo ab humanitate, sapiens a sapientia nominetur, quia prius sapientia, deinde sapiens; tamen claret alia specialis in origine quorundam nominum causa, sicut homo ab humo, unde proprie homo est appellatus. Ex quibus exempli gratia quaedam in hoc opere posuimus. ...

4. Amicus, per derivationem, quasi animi custos. 5. Dictus autem proprie: amator turpitudinis, quia amore torquetur libidinis: amicus ab hamo, id est, a catena caritatis; unde et hami quod teneant. Amabilis autem, quod sit amore dignus. Amasius, eo quod sit pronus ad amorem.

...

279. [Vilis, a villa; nullius enim urbanitatis est.] Versipellis, eo quod in diversa vultum et mentem vertat. Inde et versutus et callidus. Violentus, quia vim infert. Vecors, mali cordis et malae conscientiae. 280. Vagus, quia sine via.

30 *Homo*, deriving from *humus* (as said in fn. 20), is the base of *humanitas*.

31 This phrase is obscure and may well be textually corrupt.

32 The verb *amare* "to love" is the base of *amor*, *amasius* and *amicus*, while none of these nouns have anything to do with *anima* or *hamus* (the latter of unclear origin). Just as bizarre as those comparisons is the appeal to (the initial segments of) *torquetur* and (the final segments of) *libido* in order to "explain" *turpido*.

referring to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. To this Trinity are also referred all the other words noted below regarding God.

...

Excerpt iv: Book 10. On Words

1. THE ORIGIN of certain words [*nomina*], that is, where they come from, is not clear to almost everyone. Therefore, we have inserted some into this work so that they can learn them.

ON SOME WORDS [VOCABULA] FOR HUMANS. Although the origin of words [*nomina*], where they come from, receives this explanation from philosophers—such as, by substitution on the basis of a relation, *homo* [a human] is called from *humanitas* [humanity], *sapiens* [a wise person] from *sapientia* [wisdom], because first comes wisdom, then a wise person—nevertheless there is a different, special explanation that is evident in the origin of some words [*nomina*], such as *homo* from *humus* [earth], from which *homo* is properly called.³⁰ Some of these we have put down as examples in this work. ...

4. *Amicus* [friend], by derivation, as though *animi custos* [guardian of the soul]. 5. And *amator turpitudinis* [a lover of depravity] is said properly, because he is tormented by the love of pleasure [*amore torquetur libidinis*]; *amicus* is said from *hamus* [hook], that is, from the connection of fondness, from which come hooks,³¹ too, because they hold fast. *Amabilis* [a lovable person], then, because he is worthy of love [*amor*]. *Amasius* [a lover], for the reason that he is inclined to love [*amor*].³²

...

279. [*Vilis* (lower-class), from *villa* (farm), for he has no urbanity.]³³ *Versipellis* [skin-changing, i.e., devious], for the reason that he turns [*vertat*] his facial expression and mind in different directions. From this also *versutus* [shrewd] and *callidus* [ingenious].³⁴ *Violentus* [violent], because he applies brute force [*vis*]. *Vecors* [foolish], having a feeble disposition [*cor*] and a feeble moral conscience.³⁵ 280. *Vagus* [wandering], because without a path [*via*]. *Vanus* [vain]

33 This is again an etymology involving a negation, as for *lucus*, but in this case there is no relation between *vilis* (PIE **wes-li-*, from a root meaning “to buy;” EDL 678) and *villa*, deriving from *vicus*, on whose etymology cf. Chapter 2.4, fn. 22.

34 The odd one out is *callidus* here, unrelated to *verto* “to turn” (identical to its PIE ancestor), the base of *versi(pellis)* and *versutus*.

35 *Violentus* is derived from *violare* but the suffix, normally forming denominal adjectives (such as *vinolentus* below, which has nothing to do with *lentus* “slow;” see fn. 37), shows that in pre-literary Latin it was indeed connected to *vis* via folk-etymology (EDL 680). *Vecors* and, below, *vesanus* are analyzed correctly.

Vanus a Venere etymologiam trahit. Item vanus inanis, falsus, eo quod memoria evanescat. 281. Vesanus, non probe sanus. Vinolentus, qui et satis bibit et difficile inebriatur. Vexatus, id est portatus; ab eo quod est veho, vecto, vexo, ut vexasse sit portasse. 282. Veneficus, eo quod venenum mortis causa paravit, aut praestitit, aut vendidit. ...

Excerpt v: Liber xv. De aedificiis et agris

...

ii. DE AEDIFICIIS PUBLICIS. ...

5. Oppidum quidam ab oppositione murorum dixerunt; alii ab opibus recon-
dendis, eo quod sit munitum; alii quod sibi in eo conventus habitantium opem
det mutuum contra hostem. ...

6. ... Haec est origo oppidorum, quae quod opem darent, idcirco oppida
nominata dixerunt. Oppidum autem magnitudine et moenibus discrepare a
vico et castello et pago. 7. Civitates autem aut coloniae, aut municipia, aut vici,
aut castella, aut pagi appellantur. 8. Civitas proprie dicitur, quam non advenae,
sed eodem innati solo condiderunt. Ideoque urbes a propriis civibus conditae
civitates, non coloniae nuncupantur. 9. Colonia vero est quae defectu indige-
narum novis cultoribus adimpletur. Unde et colonia a cultu agri est dicta.

...

xvi. DE ITINERIBUS. ... 4. Via est qua potest ire vehiculum; et via dicta a
vehiculorum incurso. Nam duos actus capit, propter euntium et venientium
vehiculorum occursum.

36 While *evanescere* derives from *vanus*, all the other words are unrelated, including *Venus* < PIE **wenh₂-os* “desire” (EDL 663), including the same root as in German *wünschen* “to desire.”

37 Isidore implicitly refers to *lentus* “slow” as though this were a compound, which it is not, as *vinolentus* is an adjective formed with *vinum*, “wine” plus the derivational suffix *-lentus* (see fn. 35).

draws its etymology from *Venus* [Venus]. Again, *vanus*: “empty,” “false,” for the reason that it vanishes [*evanescere*] from the memory.³⁶ 281. *Vesanus* [insane], not rightly sane [*sanus*]. *Vinolentus* [tipsy], who both drinks a lot and only with difficulty becomes drunk.³⁷ *Vexatus* [disturbed], that is, “carried away”; *vexo* [disturb], from what is *veho* [carry], *vecto* [convey], so that *vexasse* [to have disturbed] would be “to have borne.”³⁸ 282. *Veneficus* [a poisoner], for the reason that he prepared or supplied or sold poison [*venenum*] in order to cause death. ...³⁹

Excerpt v: Book xv. On Buildings and Fields

...

ii. ON PUBLIC BUILDINGS. ...

5. Some have said that *oppidum* [town] is from the “opposition” [*oppositio*] of its walls; others, from its storing wealth [*ops*], for the reason that it is fortified; others, because the throng of its inhabitants gives one another mutual help [*ops*] against an enemy. 6. ... This is the origin of towns, which, they have said, are called *oppida* because they give assistance [*ops*].⁴⁰ Moreover, a town differs in its size and walls from a village [*vicus*], a fortress [*castellum*], and a rural district [*pagus*]. 7. Moreover, cities [*civitates*] are called either “settlements” [*coloniae*], or “free towns” [*municipia*], or villages, or fortresses, or rural districts. 8. *Civitas* is properly said for one that was founded not by newcomers but by people born in the same soil [cf. *civis*; citizen, fellow-citizen]. And for that reason, municipalities [*urbes*] that have been founded by their own citizens [*civis*] are named “cities” [*civitates*], not “settlements.” 9. But a settlement [*colonia*] is one that is filled up by new farmers [*cultores*] because of the lack of natives. So *colonia* is also said from the cultivation [*cultus*, past passive participle of *colere*] of a field.⁴¹

...

xvi. ON ROADS. ... 4. A road [*via*] is where a vehicle [*vehiculum*] is able to go, and *via* is said from the rushing of vehicles [*vehicula*]. It contains two lanes, on account of the meeting of the vehicles that are going and coming.⁴²

38 The words are indeed related, all going back to a PIE root **wegʰ-* (EDL 658).

39 *Venenum* and its derivative *veneficus* share the same root with *Venus* (EDL 660, see fn. 36), while Isidore implicitly connects it to near homophonous *venus* “sale,” which however stems from PIE **wes-no-* “price” containing the same root as *vilis* (EDL 663 and fn. 33).

40 On the etymon of *oppidum*, which is not related to *ops* and shares the prefix, not the root, with *oppositus*, see Chapter 2.4, fn. 22.

41 These relations are all correct.

42 For the respective etyma of *via* and *veho*, see Chapter 2.4, fn. 22.

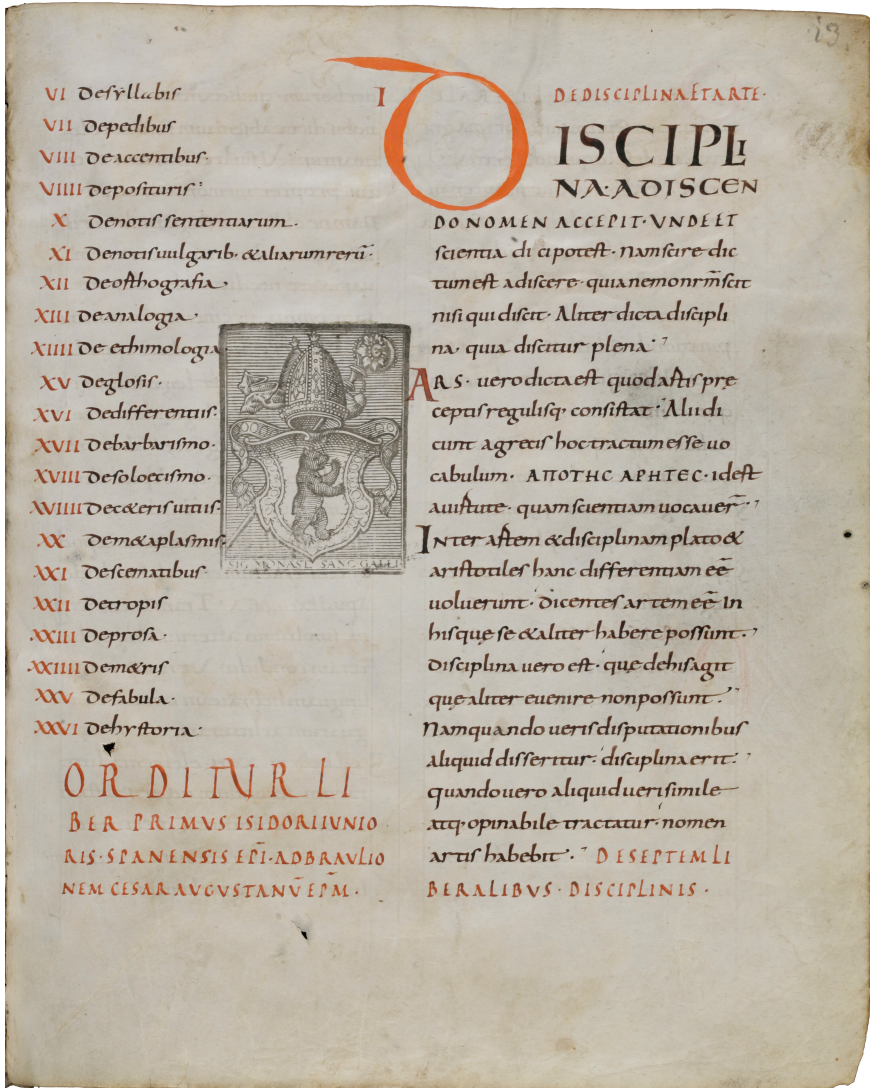


FIGURE 2.7.1 St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 231, p. 13—Isidorus, *Etymologiae*, Books I–X

[HTTP://WWW.E-CODICES.CH/EN/CSG/0231/13](http://www.e-codices.ch/en/csg/0231/13)

Abbreviations and Symbols

CSEL	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum editum consilio et impensis Academiae Litterarum Caesareae Vindobonensis</i> , Vienna: 1866–.
EDG	Beekes, Robert. <i>Etymological Dictionary of Greek</i> , 2 vols., Leiden: Brill, 2010.
EDL	de Vaan, Michiel. <i>Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages</i> . Leiden: Brill, 2008
Gk.	Greek
IE	Indo European
Lat.	Latin
LEW	Walde A., and J.B. Hofmann, <i>Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch</i> , 2 vols. 5th ed. Heidelberg: Winter, 1972.
ML	Migne, Jacques Paul, ed. <i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina</i> , Paris, 1844–1864.
PIE	Proto-Indo European
<	etymological derivation
*	reconstructed form

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