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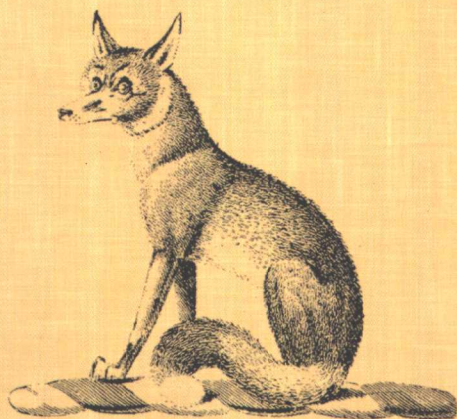
Æsop

The Complete Fables

伊索寓言

中英文对照

全集



作者 | 古希腊 | 伊索
英译者 | 英 | 奥莉维亚·坦普尔 罗伯特·坦普尔
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英译者前言

Introduction

Aesop's Fables – what a ring it has to it! Of all the names of authors from Greek antiquity, Aesop is probably the best known, more so even than Homer. But it is ironical that Aesop's reputation should be so high when so little is accurately known about him or his work and when no complete translation of his fables has ever existed in English. He is rather like a movie star – everyone thinks they know him but in fact they only know him from certain roles he has played. The roles Aesop has played have been as a children's storyteller and as a clothes-horse for Victorian morals such as 'haste makes waste' and 'pride comes before a fall' – no such morals actually occur in Aesop at all. The animal stories which parents still buy in quantities for their children's birthdays bear little resemblance to the real Aesop fables. I hesitate to say 'the real Aesop', because so little is known about the historical Aesop that some have maintained that he never actually existed.

It seems, however, that he did exist. Although the ancient *Life of Aesop*, which existed before the time of Plato, consists largely of fantasy episodes of an already legendary figure, serious scholars like Aristotle and his school made attempts to sort out the fact from fiction and came up with the conclusion that Aesop was not a Phrygian (from Asia Minor), as commonly believed in their day, but was actually a native of the town of Mesembria, in Thrace on the Greek mainland, and that he lived for some time on the Island of Samos. (This information survives in fragments of Aristotle's lost *Constitution of Samos*.)

Aesop seems to have been a slave as a result of captivity. In Greek there were two different words for slaves, denoting whether a person had been born a slave (*doulos*) or had been captured in war and sold

英译者前言

《伊索寓言》——一个何等响亮的书名！在所有古希腊作家中，最为人知的也许是伊索，其声誉之隆甚至超过了荷马。具有讽刺意味的是，伊索纵然享有盛名，涉及其作品和身世的确切资料却十分匮乏，而且此前尚无一部完整的《伊索寓言》英译本面世。伊索颇有几分像电影明星，可谓妇孺皆知，唯所了解者仅止于他扮演的若干角色。伊索在儿童心目中始终扮演一个故事大王的角色，流行于维多利亚时代的诸如“欲速则不达”、“骄矜者必败”一类的格言都归于他的名下，而实际上在伊索寓言里从未出现过此类格言。迄今为止，父母仍然热衷于把动物故事书买来当做生日礼物送给孩子，只是书中的故事和真正的伊索寓言几无相同之处。每当我提及“真正的伊索”，总觉得迟疑不决，因为人们对历史上的伊索所知甚微，以至有人认为世上本无伊索其人。

然而，有迹象表明，伊索其人并非子虚乌有。早于柏拉图时代出现的《伊索寓言》一书，虽说内容多半是向壁虚构的片断轶闻，但经过严肃的学者亚里士多德及其门人的一番去伪存真的考辨，得出与时人看法相左的结论：伊索并非小亚细亚的弗里吉亚人氏，而是色雷斯一个名为梅森布列亚的小镇上的居民。他曾在萨摩斯岛上住过一段时日（参见亚里士多德佚作《萨摩斯地方志》的残篇）。

伊索似乎曾因被俘而当过奴隶。“奴隶”在希腊文里用两个不同的词来表达，一个是doulos，指生而为奴者；另一个是andrapodon，指当了战俘卖身为奴者。伊索显然属于后

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into slavery (*andrapodon*). Aesop was apparently in the latter category. But, despite this status, which rendered him liable to sale and deprived of all rights, Aesop appears to have lived the life largely of a personal clerk/secretary and even what we could call a confidential agent for his owners. He seems to have been a great wit, whose reputation for telling little animal tales in discussion and negotiation and scoring devastatingly clever points with them astonished and impressed his contemporaries. He thus became a legendary name around which all such witty animal tales clustered in later centuries, most of the surviving ones probably not actually written by him.

Aesop lived in the early sixth century B.C., and one suggestion of his date of death is 564 B.C., which may well be correct. One of the most famous courtesans of Greek antiquity was a woman named Doricha, better known by her nickname of Rhodopis, a Thracian who seems to have been seized in war at the same time as Aesop, since they became fellow-slaves. She (and possibly Aesop as well) was taken to Egypt, where she achieved fame all over the Mediterranean world for her irresistible beauty and charm. Charaxus of Mytilene in Lesbos, brother of the poetess Sappho, became infatuated with Rhodopis and bought her freedom at an enormous price. Charaxus was, at the time, engaged in a trading trip to Egypt, selling Lesbian wine. Sappho was furious with her brother because of this wild financial extravagance, and she wrote a poem ridiculing him. These historical facts help to anchor the dates of Aesop in some kind of chronological reality. The legends of Aesop's association with King Croesus, on the other hand, appear to be pure fiction, as does a false story that Aesop went to Delphi and was thrown from a cliff while he was telling the fable of 'The Eagle and the Scarab Beetle', Fable 4 in this volume. (So widespread was the popular belief in this last episode that it is referred to by Aristophanes in *The Wasps* (1446) so briefly in passing that he clearly knows that his audience will be familiar with all the details of the story; that was in 422 B.C.)

Since the best of the Aesop fables are full of wit and jest, it is not surprising that they were great favourites of the comic playwright Aristophanes. He refers to Aesop and some of his fables many times in his surviving plays. Some references are intriguing in the clues

一种范畴,这一身份其实对他更为不利,容易被人转卖而应享有的权利也随之丧失殆尽。看来伊索比较幸运,长期担任主人的私人文书,甚至是亲信一类的角色。伊索机智幽默,聪颖过人,与人商讨事务辄以各类动物故事作譬,言必有中,语惊四座,时人莫不为之倾倒。“伊索”于是变成一个富有传奇色彩的名字,以他命名的动物故事集妙语连珠、历代相传、蔚为大观,只是保留至今的作品中的大部分故事,也许并非出自他的手笔。

伊索生活的时代约为公元前六世纪初期,有人推测他死于公元前564年,此说较为可信。古希腊名妓杜丽佳,以别号罗多琶著称,色雷斯人,据传与伊索同时被俘后沦落为奴,很可能和伊索一起被带往埃及。罗多琶国色天香,甚具魅力,迅即在地中海一带声名鹊起,艳压群芳。女诗人萨福之弟,住在米蒂利尼岛的卡拉索斯,沉湎于罗多琶的美色,不惜化费巨资为她赎身。其时卡拉索斯往返埃及,忙于经商,兜售莱斯博斯岛酒。萨福得悉其弟竟然为一名风尘女子浪掷钱财,震怒之余,特意赋诗一首以示嘲讽。以上史实当有助于廓清伊索的生存年代。另外,据传伊索和吕底亚国王克罗伊斯有过交往,此说已被证明纯属无稽之谈。至于伊索曾被派往特尔斐,因讲述“鹰和屎壳郎”的故事(见本书寓言4)而被人推下悬崖丧生一节,亦被证明完全是后人的杜撰。由于这一说法流传甚广,大家信以为真,所以阿里斯托芬在《黄蜂》里提及此事时,仅仅一笔带过,深信读者业已熟谙个中细节,无须再加赘述,其时为公元前422年。

伊索寓言中的精华部分说理深邃,极富谐趣,难怪身为喜剧作家的阿里斯托芬对之情有独钟,在他的作品中时时提及伊索和他的寓言,从而为我们提供了有关伊索寓言创作素材的时代背景。在公元前414年创作的《鸟》这部作品里,有

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they give us as to the state of the Aesopic material in his time. In *The Birds* (470), written in 414 B.C., one of his characters complains to another that he has not heard of the ancient lineage of the birds 'because you've a blind uninquisitive mind, unaccustomed to poring over Aesop'. Thus we are led to presume that early collections of Aesop fables existed in book form. And two references in *The Wasps* are interesting: at 565 Aristophanes gives some indication of how the Aesop material was conceived, when he says: 'Some tell us a legend of days gone by, or a joke from Aesop, witty and sage . . .' And at 1255, two characters are speaking of drinking parties, one of them complaining about the violent behaviour and hangovers which they normally entail, but the other claims: 'Not if you drink with gentlemen, you know. They'll . . . tell some merry tale, a jest from Sybaris, or one of Aesop's, learned at the feast. And so the matter turns into a joke . . .' The other character replies: 'Oh, I'll learn plenty of those tales . . .'

These references show that the more refined drinking parties, or symposia, at Athens in the fifth century B.C. featured repartee and witty stories, and that people attending them who wanted to make a good impression as wags and wits studied their Aesop, and made a note of remembering the tales which they heard ('learned at the feast'), in case they didn't have an Aesop collection 'to pore over' at home. A large proportion of the surviving fables are not only jokes, but are even what we call today 'one-liners'. Aristophanes clearly thought of Aesop as primarily a humorist.

The popularity of Aesop is also shown by the fact that Plato records that Socrates decided to versify some of his fables while he was in jail awaiting execution (*Phaedo* 60b). The Platonic dialogues mention Aesop several times. Fable 195 is referred to in the dialogue *The First Alibiades* (123a) in a very clever way. (This dialogue is one of the disputed dialogues of Plato, so that its authorship is not certain.)

But the deepest appreciation of Aesop in Greek times was shown by Aristotle and his school. Aristotle was a systematic collector of riddles, proverbs and folklore. He made a special study of riddles promulgated by the Delphic oracle, whose history he was keen to record. He probably collected Aesop fables in the way that he

个角色责怪另一个角色对乌的演变史所知甚微,说道:“只怨你头脑简单,闭目塞听,未下功夫去钻研伊索寓言。”由此我们可以推断,伊索寓言早已结集问世。《黄蜂》一书有两处引语耐人寻味:第565行,阿里斯托芬谈及伊索故事的构思时说道,“有人告诉我们一则古老的传说,或不如说是伊索讲述的一个笑话,堪称匠心独运,趣味隽永……”第1225行,两个角色讨论参加酒宴的得失问题,一个抱怨有人在酒宴上举止粗野,酒后失态,另一个反驳说,“你可知道,和有教养的人在一起喝酒情况就不同了:他们谈笑风生,会讲一些从酒宴上听来的锡巴里斯或伊索式的有趣故事,闻者无不开怀大笑,乐不可支……”对方回答说,“噢,有那么多有趣的有趣故事,我可得一饱耳福了……”

从以上引用的资料可以看出,公元前五世纪的雅典城,在较为高雅的酒宴上,讲述趣味隽永的故事蔚然成风,在座者为取悦他人,免不了插科打诨,为此就得熟悉伊索寓言,倘若家中未备《伊索寓言》一书,就得牢记席间听来的故事。迄今流传的伊索寓言中的大部分故事,吉光片羽,不成体段,无非是我们眼下称之为俏皮话的一类笑料而已。依照阿里斯托芬的观点,伊索本质上是一个幽默作家。

伊索寓言脍炙人口,尚可援引下列事实以为佐证。据柏拉图在《斐多篇》里的记载,苏格拉底身陷囹圄等待处决时,曾打算将若干伊索寓言用诗体形式加以改写。柏拉图的《对话录》里也曾数次提及伊索。《伊索寓言》195则被巧妙地用于对话录《亚西比德》(不过,关于这篇对话是否出自柏拉图手笔,至今聚讼未决)。

古希腊堪称伊索知音的当数亚里士多德及其信徒。亚里士多德一直热衷于系统地搜集谜语、俗谚和民间故事,尤其致力研究谜一般的特尔斐神谕,对其形成历史一一悉心收录,同时他可能一并留意采集伊索的寓言,然后条分缕析,传授给他的门人。他的外甥卡利斯提尼斯随亚历山大大帝远征

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collected everything else, and farmed out their systemization to his pupils. Doubtless through the agency of his nephew Callisthenes, who accompanied Alexander on his military expeditions, Aristotle seems to have acquired the Assyrian *Book of Ahiqar*, which contained fables, some of which were related to 'Aesop' fables. Aristotle's colleague, Theophrastus, published a book of this title (in Greek *Akicharos*), apparently a translation into Greek with his commentary (now completely lost). Theophrastus's pupil, Demetrius of Phalerum, then made a collection of Aesop fables – approximately a hundred of them – which became the standard collection for several centuries to come. If it were not for the efforts of Demetrius, most of the Aesop fables known to us today would certainly have been lost. He may well have compiled his edition of Aesop as well as his book, *Sayings of the Seven Wise Men*, from collected material in the library of Aristotle's Lyceum at Athens, which would have been his 'local university library', as he was a student there for a considerable time.

Aristotle's pupil, Chamaileon, also well known to Demetrius, made a study of the so-called 'Libyan Stories', which Aristotle says in his *Rhetoric* (II, 20, 1392b) was another collection of fables, since he there speaks of such material useful in making speeches as 'the fables of Aesop, or those from Libya'. Several of these 'Libyan Stories' appear to survive in our present Aesop collection, as we shall note in a moment. Chamaileon, in a lost work (the fragments of which were not collected by Wehrli but only by Alberta Lorenzoni in *Museum Criticum* (13/14 (1978–9) 321 ff.)), identified the author of the 'Libyan Stories' as Kybissos or Kybisses. Chamaileon seems to have continued his discussion of fables from various lands by identifying a man named Thouris as the author of certain 'Sybaritic tales', which were also fables (these are the 'jests from Sybaris' mentioned by Aristophanes in *The Wasps*), and another man named Konnis as the author of some Cilician fables from Asia Minor. The author Theon, who appears to have drawn from Chamaileon, goes on to speak of fables coming also from Phrygia and Egypt. We must bear in mind that some or all of these fable collections may be represented in our present 'Aesop' collection.

亚洲,看来亚里士多德正是通过这一途径,得到亚述人名为《阿希卡书》的一部著作,其中若干故事与伊索的寓言内容相似。亚里士多德的同行泰奥弗拉斯托斯出版过书名雷同的著作(采用希腊文Akicharos),显然由亚述文迻译而成,其中附有他写的一篇评论(至今已散佚无存)。泰奥弗拉斯托斯的学生德米特里厄斯接着将伊索寓言汇集成编,约有一百余则,成为嗣后几个世纪的范本。倘无德米特里厄斯的不懈努力,时至今日,伊索寓言的大部分内容势必荡然无存。他曾经在亚里士多德的雅典学园长期治学,很可能借助于学园图书馆(类似当地的大学图书馆)里的资料,不仅编了一本《七贤嘉言录》,还完成了伊索寓言的收集工作。

亚里士多德的弟子卡梅里翁,亦为德米特里厄斯的熟人,对《利比亚故事》进行过一番研究。亚里士多德在《修辞学》里说该书也是一本寓言集,认为无论是伊索寓言还是利比亚寓言,都能为演说提供有用的资料。伊索寓言里还保留若干利比亚故事,此点下文还要述及。卡梅里翁在一部佚著中(其断章残篇并非由威利辑录,而仅由阿伯塔·洛伦佐尼收入Museum Criticum),判定《利比亚故事》的作者系基比索斯或基比西斯。嗣后卡梅里翁在研究各万寓言时提及一个名为苏黎士的人,认为他是《锡巴里斯故事》的作者,该书的故事也是寓言(阿里斯托芬在《黄蜂》里将其称为“锡巴里斯的笑料”),同时还谈到科尼斯其人,说他撰写过小亚细亚的西里西亚寓言。另有名为西翁的作者,也许受了卡梅里翁的启发,对源自弗里吉亚和埃及的寓言作过进一步的阐述。值得注意的是,上述各类寓言的部分或者全部,可能就是我们现在看到的《伊索寓言》一书的原型。

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Aristotle actually records earlier variants of two Aesop fables, Fable 19 in his *Meteorology* and Fable 123 in *The Parts of Animals* (see notes to these fables). And, in his *Rhetoric* (II, 20, 1393b24), he tells an interesting story of how Aesop, then living on the island of Samos, defended a popular leader being tried for his life before the Assembly by telling a fable about a fox crossing a river who was swept away by the current. The fox became stuck in a hole in the rocks, where, being afflicted by swarms of fleas, she asked a passing hedgehog who had expressed sympathy not to relieve her of them because 'These fleas are by this time full of me and not sucking much blood; if you take them away, others will come with fresh appetites and drink up all the blood I have left.' Aesop used this fable to say that his client was wealthy already and, if put to death, others would come along who would rob the treasury, whereas he didn't need to. Aristotle had spent a great deal of time studying the history of Samos, and it is highly likely that this story is accurate; it indicates that Aesop was a lawyer who pleaded before the Samian Assembly and, in doing so, used his own fables in the way orators would do for centuries to come. This particular fable is most probably genuine, but was later lost (and so is not in this collection).

B. E. Perry is one of the leading Aesop scholars, having published as much on the subject as anyone in the twentieth century, and it was his view that true Aesop fables were likely to be the ones with mythological elements. An example would be Fable 119, 'Zeus and the Men'. Such fables tend to combine strange myths of how or why something came to be as it is, together with an amusing twist. Others would be Fable 73, 'The North Wind and the Sun', Fable 120, 'Zeus and Apollo', Fable 122, 'Zeus and the Jar of Good Things' (which is related to the story of Pandora's Box), Fable 125, 'Zeus the Judge', Fable 209, 'The Lion, Prometheus and the Elephant', Fable 233, 'The Bees and Zeus', Fable 290, 'The Trodden-on Snake and Zeus', Fable 297, 'The Receiver of a Deposit of Money, and the God Horkos', Fable 318, 'Polemos and Hybris', Fable 321, 'Prometheus and Men'. Fable 123, 'Zeus, Prometheus, Athena and Momos' sometimes changed its cast of characters; it is also known as 'Poseidon, Zeus, Athena and Momos' in another version, and yet

亚里士多德确曾引述过两则早期版本的伊索寓言,分别载入他的两部著作《气象学》(本书寓言19)和《动物器官》(寓言123)。亚里士多德在《修辞学》里述及一件有关伊索的趣闻。当时伊索住在萨摩斯岛,在集会上为一个被处死刑的民众领袖辩护。伊索讲了一则狐狸过河时被急流冲走的寓言。狐狸被水冲进石洞后钻不出来,遭到一大群狗虱的叮咬。一只路过的刺猬同情她,狐狸却拒绝对方的帮助,说道:“这些狗虱此刻已喝饱了我的血,再也喝不下多少了。要是你把他们撵走,别的狗虱还会飞来,他们饥火烧肠,准会把我剩下的血喝得一千二净。”伊索的寓言旨在说明,受其辩护者业已发财致富,对他无须再加防范,倘若把他处死,别的人就会接踵而至,因囊中羞涩而大肆掠夺钱财。亚里士多德长期潜心研究萨摩斯岛的历史,所述故事估计与实际相去无几。这个故事还告诉我们,伊索曾经当过律师,在萨摩斯出庭为人辩护,引征自己的寓言作譬,其后数百年的演说家无不仿效此例。上述寓言真实性强,惜已失传,故未被收入本书。

B.E.佩里乃屈指可数的伊索专家,有关伊索的著述甚丰,二十世纪的学者无出其右。根据他的看法,举凡伊索创作的寓言,大多含有神话的因素,本书寓言119《宙斯和人》即为其中一例。此类寓言往往将万物缘起归诸神话,间或笔意谐谑,妙趣横生。他例尚有寓言73《北风和太阳》、寓言120《宙斯和阿波罗》、寓言122《宙斯和好事坛》(脱胎于故事《潘多拉的盒子》)、寓言125《宙斯判案》、寓言209《狮子、普罗米修斯和大象》、寓言233《蜜蜂和宙斯》、寓言290《被践踏的蛇和宙斯》、寓言297《代管钱财的人和荷耳科斯神》、寓言318《波勒摩斯和海波丽丝》以及寓言321《普罗米修斯和人》。寓言123《宙斯、普罗米修斯、雅典娜和摩莫斯》里的角色或有变更,在另一版本里则以《波塞冬、宙斯、雅典娜和摩

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another version was recorded by Aristotle in *The Parts of Animals*, mentioned above.

Not only did the mythological identities of the gods shift and change, but Perry accurately detected a tendency for the fables to become 'de-mythologized' as time went on. A perfect example of what he means is Fable 19, which features 'the earth' swallowing the sea, but we know from Aristotle's *Meteorology* (III, 356b11) that in the original version it was Charybdis, not 'the earth', who swallowed the sea. As Greek culture evolved people became less devout and the old myths ceased to have any particular mystique. The fables thus tended to have their original mythological elements dropped, and neutral forces of nature substituted in their stead. In short, the fables became increasingly mundane and everyday, and lost much of their archaic quality. To detect these developments helps give us a feel for, among other things, how antique a particular fable might be, whether it might really be by Aesop or not and how debased a version we have in front of us.

Another aspect of the fables which Perry believed could help date them was a change in the usage of a word: *logos*. In the old days – prior to the Hellenistic period which dates from the reign of Alexander the Great – a fable tended to be called a *logos*. After that, the use of the word *logos* in that sense dropped out of fashion altogether. The word *mythos* was used instead. The 'morals' appearing at the end of many of the fables are of three types: some begin 'This *logos* shows that . . .', others 'This *mythos* shows that . . .' and a third type that begin in a different way, such as 'Thus . . .' Perry believed that the ones in the first category were all older than the ones in the second category, the former dating roughly prior to Alexander the Great, and the latter later in date in accordance with the change in the usage of the two words. This makes a great deal of sense and is probably correct.

In this translation we did not differentiate between the two, however, as we thought it would become tedious to have to have literally hundreds of occurrences of the Greek words. We simply say 'This fable shows that . . .' Anyone who is sufficiently interested in the relative dates of the fables to want to differentiate between the two categories can consult the Greek text of Chambry's edition

莫斯》的篇目命名。至于载入上述亚里士多德《动物器官》一书里的寓言,又是另一和版本了。

不仅诸神的名号有所变易,而且根据佩里的确切判断,随着时间的推移,寓言逐步呈现出一种“非神话化”的倾向。他认为这方面最明显的例子莫过于寓言19,这是一个讲述泥土吞吸海水的故事,而据亚里士多德《气象学》一书所载,在最初的版本里,吞吸海水的是女妖卡律布狄斯,而不是泥土。由于希腊文化日益演进,人们的虔诚之心渐渐淡薄,古老神话已不再具有独特的神秘色彩,寓言随之趋向于失落原先蕴含的神话因素,卒为中性的自然力量所取代。简言之,寓言日趋世俗化,更为接近日常生活,远远失去了往昔的古朴风貌。此外,回顾上述寓言的发展进程,当有助于我们了解其源远流长的历史,以及它们是否出自伊索手笔;还有助于我们了解,为何如今呈现在我们眼前的集子,竟会是一种“大为逊色”的版本。

佩里发现还有一种途径,即追溯 *logos* 一词的用法变化,也能帮助我们判定寓言的形成年代。在希腊化时代(始于亚历山大大帝当政时期)以前,寓言在希腊文里称为 *logos*。这一用法后来不再流行,于是 *mythos* 一词应运而生。众多寓言结尾的寓意分别以三种形式来表示,或曰:“本 *logos* 意谓……”;或曰:“本 *mythos* 意谓……”;而第三种方式有所不同,以诸如“由是观之……”一类的表述开头。佩里认为,第一种寓意形式出现在第二种寓意形式之前。前者约先于亚历山大大帝时代即已存在,后者出现的年代则和 *logos* 为 *mythos* 所更易的时期相当。此说合乎情理,殊足凭信。

但是,如果把数以百计的希腊文一一照搬过来,未免单调乏味,正因为考虑到这一点,所以我们的译文并未将 *logos* 和 *mythos* 这两者加以区别,一概以 “This fable shows that...” 来表示。有人如对 *logos* 和 *mythos* 两者的区别以及与之相关的年代问题有兴趣,不妨去参阅一下钱

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(see 'A Note on the Text'). But we never translate 'This fable shows that . . .' unless it is either a *logos* or a *mythos*, and the fables without either can always be distinguished. As regards those, the thinking seems to be that most of them are later still, but, on the other hand, a few of them which are of an archaic nature may be the oldest of all. For the morals seem to have been added later than the fables to which they are attached, and the relative dates indicated by the morals are not the relative dates of the composition of the fables but of their *collection*.

Some remarks need to be made about the morals. It will readily appear to most readers that the morals are often silly and inferior in wit and interest to the fables themselves. Some of them are truly appalling, even idiotic. Because they were added later by collectors of the fables, we have separated them from the fables and print them in italics. Not all the fables have morals, but most do. (When there is none in our translation, they are missing in the text.) Occasionally one comes across a really literate and worthy moral, such as that appended to Fable 22: 'Thus it is that what skill denies us, chance often gives us freely.' Such morals were added in a more philosophical spirit. But the ones that commence 'This fable shows that . . .' can be taken as having been written by orators and rhetoricians who collected the fables for use in speeches and oratory. The morals were intended as guides to someone thumbing through the collection looking for an apt story for a particular use. For instance, Fable 77 'is aimed at people who pick arguments' and, regarding Fable 74, 'One could apply this fable to those who are exposed to disgrace . . .' As for Fable 119, 'This fable applies to a man of great stature but of small spirit.' Fable 184 'applies to the covetous', Fable 233 'is applicable to those who suffer as a result of their own envy'.

Sometimes the morals even refer to specific situations in assemblies or courts: for Fable 288 we are told ' . . . in the city-states, people who interfere in the quarrels of the demagogues become, without suspecting it, the victims of both sides', and again for Fable 303 we are reminded that 'This fable shows that by meddling in affairs which one doesn't understand, not only does one gain nothing, but one also does oneself harm' – a suitable rebuke to a citizen who dares to