HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Strabo (64 B.C.-24 A.D.)

Strabo was a Greek geographer, geologist, and traveler to whom we are indebted for much of what we know of the geographical world view of his time, as well as for closely observational reports from his many travels in the Eastern Mediterranean—in fact as far as the Upper Nile or to the Hindu Kush. Strabo came from an affluent family from Pontus, in today's Turkey, but at a young age moved to Rome, then returned to Nysus, in Asia Minor, where he continued his education in a distinguished school of grammar and rhetoric. He was throughout these years, and throughout his busy life, working at the seven volumes of his *Geographica,* which we think were published for the first time around 10 A.D. This work--maps, travel reports, comments on landscape and geological change, astronomical commentary--was recovered and translated in the Renaissance, and gave new substance to our knowledge of Greco-Roman stages of cultural development. The case of Astronomy marks the advancing contribution of Strabo. His predecessor Eratosthenes, in the 3rd Century B.C., on whom he relied for the first scientific description of the visible sky, did the best he could from a *scientific* standpoint, while Strabo looked at the nomenclatures and descriptions of the heavenly bodies *anthropologically*, as expressions of the beliefs and stories of the various cultures who have named the parts of the heavens. The nature of his thinking is evident below:

…There are no trees here, but only the vineyards where they produce the Katakekaumene wines which are by no means inferior from any of the wines famous for their quality. The soil is covered with ashes, and black in color as if the mountainous and rocky country was made up of fires. Some assume that these ashes were the result of thunderbolts and subterranean explosions, and do not doubt that the legendary story of Typhon takes place in this region…. However, it is not reasonable to accept that the whole country was burned down at a time as a result of such an event rather than as a result of a fire bursting from underground whose source has now died out. Three pits are called "Physas" and separated by forty stadia from each other. Above these pits, there are hills formed by the hot masses burst out from the ground as estimated by a logical reasoning