399 Y (Twenty-fifth Letter)

This letter the philosopher Pythagoras of Samos first thought of as an example for human life. Of which the lower staff designates the first age of man. It is uncertain enough, which yet neither gives itself to vices nor to virtues. However, the fork, which is above, begins adolescence. Of which the right part is difficult but leads to the blessed life. The left is easier, but it leads to a fall.

About which Persius says:[[1]](#endnote-1) The letter which divides its Samian branches showed its rising hill on the right path to you, too. Isidore notes these things in his *Etymologiae*, book 1, c.3.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Wherefore it is said in Prov. 4[:27]: “The Lord knows the ways that are on the right hand: but those are perverse which are on the left hand.” They will be damned. However, they who are on the right will be saved.

1. Persius, Satire 3.55 (LCL 91:78-79): et tibi quae Samios diduxit littera ramos / surgentem dextro monstravit limite collem.

   The letter which divides its Samian branches showed its rising hill on the right path [15] to you, too.

   [15. Pythagoras, the philosopher from Samos, represented the choice which faces a young person as the Greek letter upsilon, originally written: ɥ. After childhood (the stem) a choice must be made between the difficult path of goodness (the vertical) and the easy path of vice (the sloping branch to the left).] [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 1.3.7-8 (PL 82:76): Υ litteram Pythagoras Samius ad exemplum vitae humanae primus formavit; cujus virgula subterior primam aetatem significat; incertam quippe et quae adhuc se nec vitiis nec virtutibus dedit. Bivium autem, quod superest, ab adolescentia incipit; cujus dextera pars ardua est, sed ad beatam vitam tendens; sinistra facilior, sed ad labem, interitumque deducens. De qua sic Persius ait:

   [Col.0076B] Et tibi quae Samios deduxit littera ramos,

   Surgentem dextro monstravit limite callem.

   8. Quinque autem esse apud Graecos mysticas litteras. Prima Υ, quae humanam vitam significat, de qua nunc diximus. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)