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The Rainbow Portrait and the Faery Queen: Emblem, Imagination and the Arthurian Gentleman.

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THE RAINBOW PORTRAIT AND THE FAERY QUEEN:
EMBLEM, IMAGINATION AND THE ARTHURIAN GENTLEMAN

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Robert Gibson Robinson III
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1969
M.A.H., Louisiana State University, 1988
December 1997
dedicated to

Rosalie Donahue
(1913-1992)

mother
of

Robert Gibson Robinson III
and
Mary Patricia Duke

The Little Engine could.
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of my committee:

Prof. Kevin Cope
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Prof. Larry Sasek
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and the support of my friends

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and
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Abstract

This work re-interprets the symbolism of the emblematic “rainbow” portrait (c. 1600) of Elizabeth I. The traditional title comes from the identification of the rainbow in the portrait as that of Genesis 9:13. In fact, this work demonstrates, it is the philosophers’ rainbow, a cryptonym for the colors — black, white, red — of the three stages of alchemic transmutation: purification, illumination, perfection. Elizabeth is represented as the Faery Queen, the alchemical monarch — historically the pre-Homeric titan Hecate — who transmutes not only the brazen world of her subjects but their brassy selves as well. In the text the portrait is therefore called the “Alchemists’ Rainbow” portrait, the AR portrait for convenience. The historical phenomena investigated have suffered cultural amnesia. The most important is a form of Renaissance Platonism hitherto not identified. Neoplatonism occurs in two main forms. One is Eratoplatonism focused on love; the other, here called Geoplatonism, is focused on a knowledge or gnosis. The vector of Geoplatonism is Proclus, although elements go back to Hesiod and Plato. Central is the function of the imagination, the nexus between no-thing and some-thing as is the point in geometry which is location without dimension. The AR portrait is a talismanic emblem meant to function in the world of Elizabeth as the point does in geometry. This hermeneutics is designated copious eclecticism.
Introduction

The present work interprets the symbolism of the “Rainbow” portrait (c. 1600) of Elizabeth Tudor (1533-1603).¹ The “Rainbow” portrait is here called the “Alchemists’ Rainbow” portrait (the AR portrait for convenience) for reasons which are the subject of this book. Elizabeth Tudor, better known as Queen Elizabeth I of England (from 1558), exercises a fascination which has persisted through the four centuries since her death. An understanding of the Faery Queen image central to the AR portrait furthers an understanding of Elizabeth herself. The method used is much like that employed in the investigation of another portrait which also fascinates. In the 1944 film noir classic Laura a detective conducts his investigation under the inspiration of a portrait of the title character. A young woman has been murdered in Laura’s apartment. The victim is mistakenly identified as Laura. The detective —Dana Andrews— is sent to her apartment to investigate. A portrait of Laura hangs in what seems to be the focal point of her fashionable living space. Somehow, everything that happens there does so with the portrait hauntingly in the background. It shows Laura —Gene Tiemy — a preternaturally attractive woman with an enigmatic expression on her lovely face. She is dressed in an elegance that transcends the dowdy young detectives experience. To him, she embodies all the things that his drab world of petty crime and prostitution is not. She fascinates him. As he begins to do his duty and try to identify her presumed killer, he becomes more interested in understanding what she represents than he is in clearing her file from his case load. His first efforts are to develop a profile of the perpetrator. Since there is little direct evidence, he must rely on informants for clues. In his investigation, he follows the order of elements of the standard detective’s method:

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opportunity, means, motive. He sets out to interview the people who are her intimates and
who so would be most likely to have one or all of these or, at least, would be in position to
tell him who else might.

He turns up a strange assortment of star-makers, hangers-on, sometime admirers, and
enviers. They are played by the army of wonderful character actors — Clifton Webb,
Vincent Price, Dorothy Adams, Grant Mitchell, Judith Anderson — who did so much to make
the films of the 40's effective. In itself the task of making some five hundred films a year
insured that the makers of these films had a workman-like grasp of plotting and, more
importantly, of the interest of characters. The detective's intention dictates the questions he
puts to his informants. He needs to find out who has killed the woman he believes to be the
woman in the portrait. To do that, he must understand how that woman has become what
the portrait shows her to be. He must profile the background out of which she emerges. The
informants are foremost of interest for what they contribute to the resolution of the task at
hand. Nevertheless, they are of some interest in themselves, however limited, because they
are factors of the background out of which she emerges. In human terms, they are the
elements of that background.

I trust that the reader will feel the fascination for the portrait of Elizabeth that the
detective feels for the portrait of Laura. It turns out in that story that there is a case of
mistaken identity. A shady but charming suitor — Vincent Price — had proposed and Laura
had gone out of town to an isolated area to consider the proposal. The suitor had taken
advantage of her apartment's being empty to consult a back-up girlfriend. A second admirer
— Clifton Webb — thought the couple in the apartment were Laura and the first suitor and
killed the woman out of pique. The plot aside, the whole film has really been a profile of a society, not only of the "characters" but also of Laura. I will be a little more straightforward than Otto Preminger, the director. The first objective of the Elizabeth story is to interpret the symbols of her portrait. The second is to understand the relationship between the Elizabethan imagination and the society of Arthurian gentlemen it produced. Although there is mistaken identity, there is no murder in the Elizabeth story. Whatever happens in it that may seem untoward happens not out of passion, but out of amnesia, cultural amnesia. However culpable cultural amnesia may or may not be, it cannot be prosecuted. There is no statute against it. It will be argued below (p. 97 ff.) that Francis Bacon was one of the main perpetrators of that cultural amnesia. He conceived and put into circulation what was to become the modern notion of culture, a notion which eventually replaced that of the Arthurian gentleman. Bacon's intention specifically was to redirect the efforts of the Arthurian gentleman to ends he thought more appropriate. But that is for later.

The important point to make for the present has to do with the method of presentation. As the reader will know by now, it is that of the detective story. The detective does not put every single thing that he knows in his report about his informants, but limits himself to those things which have a direct bearing on his case. I have observed a similar limitation. Sometimes new characters — a homo geometricus, who prefers analogy to analysis, or a Geoplatonist, who interprets on the principle of copious eclecticism — turn up. They are explained in the proper context. Anyone familiar with the extent of the subject area staked out by the AR portrait, the faery queen, the emblem, the imagination will understand the necessity of this economy. Any object, the object of this study for example, must be big
enough to be seen at all, but small enough to be taken in as a whole. Large tomes could be — and have been — written about my informants, but that is not my intention. It is my intention is to answer the questions about the interpretation of the symbols of the AR portrait which a familiarity with the thought of my “informants” makes possible. I do not try to answer every single question that I might about any one of them, least of all about the disconcerting John Dee, Elizabeth’s “philosopher” (see p. 8 below). I do not analyze the rhetorical strategy in his *Mathematical Preface*, a subject dear to me. To do so would disrupt the economy of the investigation beyond the intelligible. The reader will quickly find out that he or she, while juggling with the narrative, has enough things to keep in the air without constantly being handed others simply because they’re interesting. What I do discuss is just the tip of the iceberg. To the good it can be said that if we know where the tip of the iceberg is, we have a good idea where the rest of it is. I can only say, apologetically, that if an enthusiast wants to pursue any one of the topics touched on, he or she can avail himself or herself of all the scholarly esoteria in the bibliography which I have turned up in the last six years. I myself leave these enthusiasms for later works.

The above having been said about what I include, a few words must be said about what I exclude. Given that the importance of the figure of the faery queen, it may be surprising that I say almost nothing about text of the *Faery Queene* itself. The interest Spenser has in the present context, whatever his interest elsewhere, lies in whatever his opening apologetic polemic *A Letter of the Authors* tells us about his evaluation of the audience for which he was writing. The mind set of that audience — what they accepted as the norm (“normal”) is the first thing needful to establish, just as the detective must establish
the profile of how his informants and suspects think. That is why the written works — as
against their drawn works — of my various informants are all apologies and polemics mostly
in the form of introductions. What interests me is their opinion of what their prospective
readers will or will not accept. How well or poorly they judged is stuff for another kind of
work, but not this one.

If we go down the rubrics of the subtitle — emblem, imagination, Arthurian
gentleman — there will be more omissions surprising to those familiar with the subject areas.
The first is that on the subject of emblems I talk little of Alciati, the recognized formulator of
the emblem and the creator of the term.2 The reason that I don't is that I see Alciati's 1531
Emblemata as a manifestation of the visualizing mind set dominant during his lifetime, an
effect rather than a cause. Of course, after 1531 his work it turn became a cause. To cite an
example, Erasmus — who makes a cameo appearance from time to time in this mystery —
occaisioned a pan-"European" uproar when a medallion by Quentin Metays which he had
commissioned came into circulation in 1519.3 The medallion, other than being cast in metal
rather than printed, has the prototypical structure of the emblem: picture, first scripture or
motto, second, optional scripture or commentary. The medallion shows the bust of a young
man on a square block of a boundary marker which bears the word terminus. The motto
concedo nulli [I concede to no one] is split on either side of the head. The commentary is
printed around the perimeter of the coin: ora telos makrou biou (consider the end of a long
life) and mors ultima linea rerum (death is the last line of everything), an appropriate thought
for a writer. The other side bears the image of Erasmus and the date 1519. The uproar was
caused by those who chose to interpret the / who concedes to none as Erasmus himself rather
than death as he insisted was his original intention. But the very fact that there was an
uproar shows that the prototype of the emblem as a medium was already widespread in
Europe at least twelve years before the appearance of Alciati's work.

The omissions under the second rubric, imagination, will be even more surprising to
anyone familiar with the field. There is almost no reference to the corpus Hermeticum introduced into Europe by Ficino's 1465 translation. The main reason is well summed up in section 14 of the Latin Asclepius (Copenhaver, 1995, 75): "This a philosophy unprofaned by relentlessly curious thinking." It is exactly the relentlessly geometrizing rationalism of Dee et al. that one misses in the corpus Hermeticum. It is found, however, in the Tableta Smaragdina (the emerald tablet) a widely known anonymous Arabic text of the ninth century that is in the tradition of the confluence of astronomy and alchemy — which I designate astroalchemy — that is characteristic of Dee's work. Its thirteen sentences, an exemplary brevity, are in the form of an oracular revelation from Hermes Trismegistis himself and so account for Dee's allusions to that sage without need to recur to the corpus Hermeticum.

Other worthwhile subjects bypassed are the Chaldean Oracles as well as what is traditionally lumped together with other forms of Platonism under the heading Neoplatonism. Here it is isolated and identified as Geoplatonism (see p. 26 ff. below) because of the centrality of geometry in it. In the interest of economy, the origin of the relevant identity of Hecate, the pre-Hellenic goddess here proposed as the ultimate inspiration of the portrait, is located in Hesiod's Theogony and its transmission to the work of the last of the Platonic diadochi Proclus (410-486). The reason is not that there are no other sources which might be profitably discussed in this context. There are. But a discussion of even some of them
would introduce so many side issues into the presentation that a development which even in its simplest form is complex would become “inconceivable.” The first methodological intention of the present work is clarity, so the discussion of Plotinus, Porphyry, Iambicus and so forth is left to those who are better informed about them than I am. Only Proclus is discussed in any detail in the context of what I call Geoplatonism. Again, I am specifically interested in what a detective would call a profile, a mathematician a matrix, or a doctor a syndrome, of the ideas which generate the attitudes which inform the symbols of the AR portrait. For that reason again, the discussion of Florentine and general European Platonism is limited to Pico with no intimation that Ficino, Paracelsus, Agrippa et al. are not worthwhile in this context. Put simply, Pico can be shown to be the disseminator of concepts which appear in the works of the others. Nevertheless, the possibility of a common source in tradition is conceded.

The last of the three subtitle rubrics is the Arthurian gentleman. This is probably the aspect that most strongly induces cognitive dissonance. On the face of it, it is difficult to see how the Elizabethans interwove the first two, the emblem and the Geoplatonic imagination, with this last. Whereas the first two seem to be innovative, this third seems to be anachronistic, a survival of a distant past. In fact, this is an illusion. Heraldry, the coats of arms closely related to the emblem, and heralds, the people responsible for recording them, do not reach their “modern” state until the fourteenth century (Keen, 125). Measured on an historical scale of time, the separation between then and the mid-sixteenth century is almost nothing. An important consideration has to do with the original intention behind the heraldic emblem. The Oxford Guide to Heraldry (1988, 3) pronounces that “the depiction of arms on
a shield was a subjective demonstration on the part of individual warriors, a form of individual 'vanity' rather than a practical military device." This opinion reflects the wisdom of someone who has considered what it would be like in close mass combat to try to go around reading people's two dimensional shields. It is much more likely that from the beginning the heraldic emblem present a self-image of its bearer, "vanity" if you will.

Yet another consideration has to do with the role of Arthur. Keen notes that Arthurian history taught that "glory was to be associated with high courage and loyal service. The ceremony and ritual and insignia...were designed to uphold and teach that principle (199)." I demonstrate throughout this work that the administration, minimal as it was, centered on loyalty and service, the queen having no equivalent of the IRS. The use to which Elizabeth and her gentlemen put the Arthurian principle must, in this light, show its innovative essence. Nevertheless, writers consistently confuse Elizabethan sentiment with Victorian sentimentality.

The last question to be touched on here will be the history of the biography of John Dee, often represented as a sort of erudite charlatan. Dee is the personality in this mystery on whom all the elements of the subtitle converge and from whom they diverge. In 1659 Meric Casaubon published the first biographical treatment of Dee, *A True and Faithful Relation of what passed for many years between Dr. John Dee and Some Spirits*. This lurid reworking of the *Libri Mysteriorum*, Dee's own records of his attempts to contact angels, has colored biographical efforts around Dee ever since. The assumption is always that there was something extraordinary — in terms of the day, of course — about attempts to contact angels. One burden of the present work is to show that this assumption is not so. Dee may
have been part of an elite, but the members of that elite were, and saw themselves as, orthodox. Their reputations are victim to their success in discrediting that orthodoxy.

A more factual treatment of Dee had to wait until 1930 when the *Tudor Geography (1485-1583)* of E.G.R. Taylor appeared. This work, a biography of Dee which focuses on his mathematical and navigational work, has the virtue of focusing on the more conventional aspects of Dee's work while downplaying the less. It suggests the conundrum that has dominated Dee's biography since: how to reconcile the angels with the ships, objects of very different orders of being. The next contribution came in 1968 with Richard Deacon's *John Dee: Scientist, Geographer, Astrologer and Secret Agent to Elizabeth I*. It is not hard to correlate the elements of his subtitle with the profile already proposed. Here what cannot be explained by the assumption that Dee was a would-be scientist ends up explained by the assumption that he was a spy and all the business with angels had to do with cryptography. There can no objection to the assumption that Dee was involved in gathering intelligence for Elizabeth. In fact, it would have been extraordinary had he not been. Everybody else was. But that still does not come to grips with the question of why he would have thought it possible to recruit angels in the first place.

The next effort to find Dee a place among our respected progenitors was the 1969 *Theater of the World* of Francis A. Yates. Yate's intention is to demonstrate that Dee's cogitations had some practical effect on the world around him, practicality being something we all admire. To do this, she isolated the centrality of architecture in Dee's *Mathematical Preface* and set out to prove that he had influenced the design of Globe Theater built in 1599. Her argument is the best one that can be adduced in support of her thesis, but the thesis itself
suffers from the desire to validate Dee in terms that have little to do with him. Dee was not in any aspect a figure of the theater although it could be argued that his major “practical” effect was exactly to inspire Inigo Jones’ theater.

Following Yates, Peter French published in 1972 *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus*. This work takes on squarely the magical aspects of Dee’s career and turns them into an asset rather than a liability. French is right in insisting that the distinction (although these are not his terms) between the lower magic of, say, the wizard or the witches coven and the higher magic of thaumaturgy — wonder working — and theurgy — godlike working — is crucial. The magus (magician) emerges even more clearly than in Yates as the precursor of the modern scientist, selflessly working away for the advancement of physics. This idea is, again, an anachronism. A major irony is that Dee mentions the work of the monk John Baptist de Benedictis who took the first steps toward the principle of gravity. Dee states explicitly that important discoveries in the field of ballistics were possible if they were followed up (*Mathematical Preface c.i.*). This observation was made some fifty years before Galileo made ballistics the prototypical science of physics. The point is that Dee was not unaware of the potential of certain ideas. The thrust of his interest lay elsewhere.

The next work, which appeared in 1988, was Nicholas H. Clulee’s *John Dee’s Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion*. This work is a masterpiece of the collection of Dee’s texts and their sources as well as close and relevant readings. Everyone who works in the field will be grateful to him for the totality of his vision and its perspicacity. Clulee’s intuition is that Dee’s work has something to do with religion, but his — Clulee’s — interest is science. Whose viewpoint should be normative, the writer’s or the subject’s.
In 1995 the most recent book on Dee, William H. Sherman's *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing* once again Dee appears in an anachronistic garb, this time that of the grant grubbing modern academic. Little consideration is given to Dee's social position in the Tudor hierarchy nor to the function of university education in Tudor society. One has the impression perusing the careers of Tudor functionaries to be that Cambridge and Oxford were considered a sort of finishing school, a nice place to spend a couple of years before moving on the Inns of Court for the study of law or some other serious undertaking. The only difference that Dee shows in this respect is that an academic degree had a direct bearing on his service to the Tudors and should therefore be seen in this respect as the equivalent of a law degree. The point is that the fact that Dee took a degree does not mean that he ever intended to be an academic. His intention from the very first was to serve the Tudor succession. If he needed a degree to that, he took one. Even before he finished, he was at Louvain garnering skills and instruments for his backward nation. He was one of the first and most successful practitioners of technological transfer. Among his most important contributions to the thought of the circle of Elizabeth's advisers were images that appear from the beginning to the end of her reign. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the present work for the reader will be — as it was for the writer — the tension between an impatience to solve to the mystery of the symbolism of the AR portrait with its attendant questions and the patience necessary to solve the mystery of the origin — to use a mathematical expression — of the intellectual matrix which generated such a work. The detective story and the history of ideas may be in a tug of war with one another. The impatient reader will find of the explication of portrait's symbolism at the end of chapter 4.
Chapter I: Images

To interpret the complex of symbols that appear in the emblematic AR portrait one must first determine the tradition that the concept of imagination informing these symbols originates in. Then, one must then determine the function of that concept in the AR portrait as a whole. These symbols have by and large to do with astrology and alchemy (hereafter astroalchemy), the two being considered complementary in the fifteen and early sixteen hundreds. This chapter identifies the points that give definition to this complex subject, but defers their discussion to the appropriate places in the text. A specific concept of imagination plays a mediating role in the relationship between the Queen and the Arthurian gentlemen of her inner circle. Relevant evidence is found principally in a series of works that runs from 1545, twelve years before Elizabeth's accession up to 1601 — the conjectured date of the AR portrait— some two years before her death in 1603. These works are more or less evenly spaced out over the four and a half decades that she was queen and are a representative selection of the activities of her gentlemen:

1545 the armillary emblem in the “Woodstock” psalter
1570 A Mathematical Preface both John Dee (1527-1608)
1575 The Woodstock Faery Queen Sir Henry Lee (1533-1610)
1583 An Apology for Poetry Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)
1590 A Letter of the Authors Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)
1597 the Gorhambury emblems Francis Bacon (1563-1602)
1601 Alchemists’ Rainbow Portrait commissioned by Sir Robert Cecil (1546-1612)
1603 The Proficiency and Advancement of Learning also Francis Bacon

This list gives witness that emblems and emblematic works played a role even before Elizabeth's reign began right up to its end. The emblem was a crucial instrument facilitating the metamorphosis of the quondam knight of the king into the gentleman of the queen.1
In *Richard II* (1589) Shakespeare has Bolingbroke explain the significance to the gentleman of his “household coat [of arms]” or, to use the word in its Italian form, his *impressa*. Having dealt with the first of the prototypical evil advisors of the king, Bolingbroke specifies the charges against two other “caterpillars of the realm” Bushy and Green (8-27). First, they have mislead a king. Second, they have alienated the king’s affections from the queen. Third, they have turned the king against Bolingbroke leading to his exile and the confiscation of his properties. Fourth, they have squandered all Bolingbroke’s revenues, undone his parks, and cut down all his trees, the source of any future revenues. Bolingbroke then, and only then, comes to the heart of the matter. They have:

From mine own windows torn my household coat [of arms],
Razed out my impressa (*impressa*), leaving me no sign,
Save men’s opinions and my living blood
To show that I am a gentleman.

Bolingbroke has adopted the rhetorical strategy of leaving his best point — in this case his worst and most telling — until last. His “household coat [of arms]” is the emblem — *impressa* is a synonym for emblem — which identifies him and in a critical sense constitutes him and his status or “state” as Bolingbroke the gentleman as opposed to the mere “living blood” of Harry Hereford. The climax of his argument is the violation of his emblem. The “coat” denotes not so much himself or his birth, but his whole ”household” with gentlemen and followers. “Bolingbroke” is similar to “Leviathan,” the emblem which prefaces Hobbes’ work of that name (1649); both are a coming together of many individuals. The emblem is dynamic, not static. It is the declaration of an *impressa*, an undertaking or enterprise.² It therefore represents at once an affirmation and a challenge to himself as well as to others.
Rightly seen, the emblem is more important than all the rest. He can have the status that the emblem confers without the lands, but not the status that the lands confer without the emblem. Without his emblem to show forth his truth, Bolingbroke is thrown into a Platonic hell of “men’s opinions” There is no sure knowledge of him. Such is the emblem of Shakespeare/Bolingbroke.

Some of the names and works in the list above will be not be recognized even by those familiar with the field of the emblem. Both names and works are usually discussed in separate contexts in accordance with the professional conventions of late 1900's academics, conventions which did not exist in the 1500's. As a result, the possibility that they have anything in common has not been evident and has at times even been obscured. The list seems at first glance to consist of disparate individuals and their even more disparate works. The individuals, nonetheless, have in common the intention to create “such a divinity [as] doth hedge a king”3 by celebrating an enigmatic, emblematic Elizabeth who de facto as well as de jure was the “state,” the person on whom the Tudor succession and so the status of everyone else depended. In doing so, they utilized any instrument or implement — organon in Bacon's sense — provided by tradition. Two of the most powerful of these instruments were the narrative of Arthur and the tradition of Neoplatonism. Arthur was the symbol of Tudor legitimacy, Britannic unity, and Elizabethan independence, in short, of her imperium.4 Neoplatonism — or, better, its aspect here called Geoplatonism legitimated the integration of the emblematic image of the gentleman with the images of its imagination.

The interpretation of the complex of symbols present in the AR portrait and the determination of the transmission and function of the Geoplatonic imagination, the two
objectives of this work, demonstrate the coherence, all appearances to the contrary, of the thought and lives of the individuals in the list. They all knew and knew of one another. Their works constitute a dialog which documents the existence of a specific imagination in the Elizabethan mind set. The consideration of these Elizabethan documents necessitates the consideration of a second set of more European documents. The concept of imagination common to these figures is the one elaborated and propagated by Proclus (410-486). Proclus was the last important mathematician philosopher in direct succession to Plato’s Academy before the Emperor Justinian closed the schools of Athens in 529. “The part played by the imagination,” writes Glen R. Morrow, the translator of Proclus’ A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid Elements, “is Proclus’ main addition to...Platonic theory. (xxxv).” This “addition” in time became virtually the sum of that theory, so much so that, in order to avoid confusion with other forms of Platonic theory, it is better to call it and its elaborations Geoplatonism as is done here. These share an identification with geometry which itself was equated with mathematics. What is usually called Neoplatonism focuses on love rather than mathematical knowledge and is better called Eratoplatonism. The study of the transmission history of Proclus’ Geoplatonic imagination examines the works of the following authors, some of whom are known by only by pseudonyms. These works, except the first, are the main avenues of its historical diffusion:

200 The Latin Aesclepius pseudo-Hermes Trismegistus c. 200
480 A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid Elements Proclus (410-486)
5?? The Celestial Hierarchy pseudo-Dionysius the Aeropagite (c. 500)
524 The Consolation of Philosophy Boethius (480-524)
1496 Oration on the Dignity of Man Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494)

This is once more a list that appears to be made up of disparate works and authors; Hermes
Trismegistis and Dionysius the Areopagite are even *nomes de plume*. However, it is demonstrated that the lines of transmission of the relevant concept of the *imagination* emanate both directly from Proclus and indirectly from him through his emulators. The images of that *imagination*, even when written, are visual rather than verbal. Yates, for example, remarks that "Spenser's is an intensely visual *imagination* (1974, 74)". Sidney's editor is at pains to account for the fact that his poetics is more visual than verbal. The emblematic visuality of the *imagination* that informs the AR portrait is self-evident. The fact that whoever executed the portrait is not known with certainty is itself significant and suggests that it comes out of a time and place where the vision of the work is more important than the verification of the workman. The notion of the divine artist had not yet replaced that of the devoted artisan in England. Divinity was imputed, if at all, not to the artist, but to his object, the truth which informs appearances.

The question of the meaning in detail of the portrait and the identity of its maker aside, one thing is certain about the portrait: who commissioned it. That was Sir Robert Cecil, the gentleman who was Elizabeth's last Principal Secretary of State. This origin relates the content of the portrait to two central concerns of the period. The first is the personal security of Elizabeth, the burden of the office of the Principal Secretary of State. The second is her relationship with her gentlemen, who in an *imitatio Arthuri* made up her inner circle. They were the advocates who created the "hedging divinity" as well as other, more profane forms of personal security, spies for example. Thus they were responsible for the Elizabeth's state of visibility as well as her invisible state. The word *gentleman* is not used in this context in its modern senses of any more or less presentable male or someone with relatively good manners,
but its technical sense in the 1500's. Then to be a gentleman meant to be a member of the

gentry, the people who, along with a limited number of nobles,\(^6\) were the 2,500 people

comprising what Alan G. R. Smith calls the "politically conscious class in Elizabethan

England (1967, 60)." A member could, like Bolingbroke, have a coat of arms. Today a coat

of arms may seem a charming and colorful anachronism; then it meant that you were

"known" and therefore had presumptive claim to the 1,200 places outside the church "worth

a gentleman's having." Some 1,000 of these gentlemen held one or more of these places. A

coop of arms meant that -- in a world where "all things [are] accounted by their showes

(Spenser, 1590)" -- one "appeared" and was not obscure in the quasi-invisible world

dependent on men's opinions alone. If these calculations are valid, they mean that two out of

five or forty percent of these 2,500 individuals were in Elizabeth's service in various offices.

These start at the top from Principal Secretary of State, held by Robert Cecil and Lord

Treasurer, held by his father William, Lord Burgley, after he was Principal Secretary. There

is also Lord Keeper of the Seal, a non-ennobling title for Lord Chancellor held by Nicholas,

the father of Francis Bacon (1561-1626). The posts then go down through ones having to
do with the management of royal lands -- stewardships of manors and keeperships of parks
and houses, like the position at Woodstock just north of Oxford held by Sir Henry Lee

(1533-1610) as well as his office of Champion of the Queen at Accession Day and other
tournaments. It was Lee who first introduced the Faery Queen in an entertainment at
Woodstock in 1575 (see below p. 30). Further, there was the position of secretary to the

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, commander of the army of occupation there, held by Edmund

Spenser (1552-1599) as well as that of Governor of the garrison at Flushing in the
Netherlands held by Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) where he died of wounds received in combat. Nor should one forget the position of Queen's Philosopher held by the ubiquitous John Dee (1527-1608). The 1,500 individuals left who were not directly in Elizabeth service more often than not were the relatives, in-laws, playmates, schoolmates, friends and enemies of those who were. The smallness and closeness of this class both genealogical and geographical is a given in understanding it. There are two other things important to keep in mind. This class was for all practical purposes the entire administration, foreign and domestic, of England during the period. Furthermore, the individuals included were administrators. To write about them as though they were disaffected academics of the late 1900's is anachronistic. These were the people responsible for getting things done and, by and large, they did get things done. Their names constitute a muster roll — the original meaning of the Latin word classis — of the trained military and intellectual human resources that could be called up to deal with the contingencies and emergencies of the 1500's.

Most galling to this class was what they felt to be the England's lack of recognition on the continent. Much of the careers of Dee and Spenser, to give only two examples, can be seen as part of the effort to overcome this perceived slight in the fields respectively of practical/theoretical mathematics and the national epic. But in Tudor history they were only following the lead set by Henry VIII and his in every sense vain wars on the continent. These wars, together with the reckless spending of Mary in support of the Netherlands' campaigns of her husband Philip II, left England bankrupt in all but name when Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558. Because of the resonance of the "Elizabethan" in the more mythological of English History, it is often not realized that much of its "literary" activity was inspired directly
by the fervent attempts of its class of gentleman to reassert English prowess in the intellectual as well as the military fields.

Frances A. Yates (1975) and Roy Strong (1977, 1987), the two most important interpreters of the AR portrait, long ago recognized the decisive role played by the gentlemen of Elizabeth's inner circle in the creation of -- as well as a plethora of other images -- the "Rainbow" portrait. Two phrases, apparently coined by Yates, indicate this clearly. The first, the "imaginative re-feudalization of Europe," appears in Yates 1975 and Strong 1987. The second, the "cult of Elizabeth," is so pervasive that Strong's 1977 title *The Cult of Elizabeth* (1977) is the only example needed. Both have to do with Elizabeth, the virgin queen, the first under the aspect of queen, the second under the aspect of virgin, principally in relation to the virgin Mary, whose cult was widespread in pre-Reformation Europe. This work follows the lead of Yates and Strong in positing that the questions of imagination and the relationship between Elizabeth and her gentlemen -- their "feudalism" -- are crucial in the interpretation of the "Rainbow" portrait. It differs on the exact nature of the relevant concept of the imagination and the exact nature of the relationship between Elizabeth and her knights/gentlemen.

Enough has already been said on the first question to indicate the direction of the argument. The second question is general and has to do with the nature of the administrative form that is called feudalism. In short, after the collapse of the *Imperium Romanum* in the wake of the sack of Rome in 410, potential leaders of whatever origin in its former area faced a dilemma that is familiar to anyone who grew up in the aftermath of the American Civil War: they were "land poor." They had lots of land, but no cash. The same was true of the Europe
from the 800's at least up through the 1600's. Feudalism — grants of “units of agrarian production” against military service — as a means of financing administration was an historical accident, not the essence or heart of the administrations that resorted to it. As Carl Stephenson points out in Medieval Feudalism, “If the rulers had been able to hire mounted troops for cash, recourse to feudal tenure would have been unnecessary (1986, 12).” In short, they were not stupid. They knew that to delegate economic control was in effect to delegate civil control. The expedient often weakened them politically as much as it strengthened them militarily. In any case, their authority did not rest on a theory of feudalism or any other -ism. To quote Stephenson again, “To preserve and strengthen their authority, these rulers depended less on their theoretical sovereignty than on the fidelity of their personal retainers, now styled vassals [in English, knights] (11).” To paraphrase the old saw about the sovereign and religion, no bishop, no king, it is clear that no knight, no king was even more true. For Elizabeth, it was no gentleman, no queen. One can concede that her administration — like all administrations — had to be financed somehow without seeing the ways and means as definitive. Her peculiar talent was the ability to spot competent advisors, then to win their loyalty and keep it (see Bacon’s comments pp. 110-111 below). So, the present focus is not on imagination and “feudalism” or any other -ism, but on imagination and the relationship of Elizabeth with her gentlemen. The point is similar in relation to the “cult” of the virgin queen. The word cult suggests an excessive or obsessive devotion or veneration, in short, an irrational or manipulative attitude. Again, one does not have to deny that the attention given Elizabeth at times or even often fits the description in order to assert that these characteristics are not the heart of the matter. This work shows that, whatever the
excesses, the motivation behind these manifestations is essentially rational, even geometrical. That leaves the question of the identity of the virgin. There are a number of possibilities, the first being, of course, Elizabeth herself. Having seen with her own eyes the result of the marriage of her half-sister Mary to Philip II, she had every reason to be leery of a commitment which would compromise not only her own authority, but the welfare of her country as well. A second possibility is the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose veneration, cult if you will, was widespread in pre-Reformation Europe. An identification with her would serve to lessen the force of the “Old Religion” while strengthening Elizabeth's position which was weakened by her unmarried state and lack of successor.

There is a third possibility and that is the virgin Hecate. Hecate was the only titan to survive the Olympic reform of Homer. She was too deeply rooted in pre-Hellenic Greece to ignore for long. Although Homer does not mention her at all, Hesiod in the *Theogony* devotes some twenty lines to her whereas each of the Olympians gets two at most. She was so popular that under one form or another she was still a semi-official patroness of Constantinople when it fell in 1453. Along with the Olympians, she was adopted in the 400's by Geoplatonic philosophers and adapted to their need for a divinity to confront those of proselytizing religions like Christianity. The details of this syncretism and its transmission are dealt with in the appropriate place (pp. 55-58 below). Hecate was not so much a virgin as the goddess who held exclusive sway before the Olympians, that is, before the institution of marriage and even before the discovery of the role of males in procreation. Hecate brings with her the peculiar conflation of geometry and astroalchemy — magic generally — in the Geoplatonism of Proclus. The present work agrees generally with the Yates-Strong...
hypothesis, the above reservations noted, in seeing the questions of the imagination and the relationship of the queen and her gentlemen as the crux. It goes even farther in recognizing “how very peculiar the English Renaissance was, both socially and intellectually,” a recognition Yates feels is lacking (1969, 19). She goes on, “John Dee is the perfect exemplar of its peculiarities, perhaps even one of its main sources. To solve Dee would go far towards solving not only the Elizabethan age itself, but also it place in the history of [European] thought.” In fact, the burden of this work might be seen as resolving the peculiarities of Dee and his time by resolving the peculiarities of the AR portrait. The claim is not that Dee single-handedly created or even transmitted all of the symbols in it, although it can be documented that he created at least one of the symbols and there is at least a preponderance of circumstantial evidence that he was responsible for its theme. The importance of Dee is that he collects influences from hither and yon historically and transforms them into a program that, however bizarre at times, is recognizably that of the English gentleman. In fact, many of the things that seem bizarre about his career can be explained by his efforts to apply historical Geoplatonism to the conditions of his day.

There is only one major disagreement with Yates and that has to do with the relationship between Dee and Bacon. Yates states that Dee’s Mathematical Preface is “more important than Bacon’s [Proficiency and] Advancement of Learning, published thirty-five years later, for Dee fully understood and emphasized the importance of mathematical studies for the advancement of science...” The position taken here is that these works of Dee and Bacon complement rather than contradict one another. Together they provide a running evaluation of the thought of almost the entire second half of the 1500’s. Bacon like Dee had
at heart the best method — to use a word endemic then — for gentleman to serve the "state," i.e., the Tudor succession. They disagreed, but not so greatly as might seem at first reading.

The two leading hermeneutic principles which inform the present work derive from figures of the period. Aubrey reports that William Harvey once remarked that “Bacon writes science like a Lord Chancellor, but I cured him of that.” Bacon wrote “science” the same way all his life, so the second half of the *bon mot* is either facetious or fatuous. But the first half contains a precious insight, particularly for those who insist, as is usual, on writing about Bacon and Dee as if they were or ever intended to be what nowadays is considered a scientist. It is hard to say whether this standpoint is more egocentric or anachronistic. The standpoint taken here is that the writers wrote like exactly what they were: gentlemen in the service of Elizabeth. If that service afforded obligations and opportunities beyond those of today, so much the better. Writers often feel that all the people they admire are obligated to be all the things they admire. How else can Strong write: “It is one of the great paradoxes of the Elizabethan world, one of its touchstones, that an age of social, political, and religious revolution should cling to and deliberately erect a facade of the trappings of feudalism. (1977, 162). There seems to be no thought that the “trappings of feudalism” may have been not a facade, but a mighty canopy. Far from clinging to it, the Elizabethans, ensconced in it, went about their historical business with an untrammeled will and imagination. The evolution — to avoid the more trendy revolution — of concepts so dear today might, one must concede, have come about otherwise. But, in fact, it did not. In short, the Elizabethans solved or resolved the problems of their day, not ours, whether it may redound to their discredit or not.
The second hermeneutic principle is well stated by Sidney (1586, 16): "[F]or any understanding knoweth the skill of the artificer standeth in that Idea or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself." The works to be examined are introductory and apologetic, either a profession in defense of an attitude like Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* (1585) or a personal defense like Spenser’s *A Letter of the Authors* (1590). They deal with the intention of the author in writing the work in question. Since the intention here is to follow the history of specific concepts rather than the evaluation of literary merit, the discussion focuses on these apologetics rather than on execution, e.g., the question how far *The Faery Queen* as we have it corresponds or not to the outline in *A Letter of the Authors*.

This said, one last thing remains to do and that is to somehow characterize the mind set of the individuals whose works are the present subject. A modern text comes to mind in which the writer says that at four or five he noticed that the needle of a small compass with which he was playing always pointed a “determined” way. He concluded that there must be something behind things that determined them but was deeply hidden. The word for hidden that the 1500’s would have used was *occult*, a word which meant simply hidden or not known without necessarily suggesting magic black or white. The writer goes on to say that at the age of twelve he came across and read Euclid’s *Elements of Geometry*:

> Here were assertions...that, though by no means evident, could nevertheless be proven with such certainty that any doubt was out of the question. This lucidity and certainty made an indescribable impression upon me. That the axioms had to be accepted unproven did not bother me. In any case, it was quite sufficient for me if I could base proofs on propositions whose validity appeared to me to be beyond doubt (9, italics mine).
This was not written in 1547 by the nineteen year old John Dee when he took his B.A., left Cambridge and began his life's quest. His first trip was to Louvain “to speak and confer with some learned men, chiefly mathematicians (13 (cited Sherman, 1995, 5).” It was written some four hundred years later in 1948 by the then seventy-six year old Albert Einstein. Nevertheless, reading it, one has the eerie feeling to be once more in the presence of Proclus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Boethius, Pico, and, above all, John Dee. At the deepest level, the burden of the present work is to make clear how “propositions”[axioms] which in the late 1900's appear not only wild-eyed but simply wrong-headed could in the 1500's appear to be “beyond doubt.” Surely at the side of homo sapiens, homo faber, homo ludens, etc., should appear homo geometricus. The difference between his “proofs” in the 1500's and his proofs in the 1900's is a matter of differing axioms and that is a matter of history. Homo geometricus is a figure who has played a decisive if little recognized role in the intellectual history of humanity. In a critical sense, the story of homo geometricus is the intellectual history of humanity.
Chapter 2: Images of Elizabeth

In “The Elizabethan Image,” the conclusion of the first part of The Cult of Elizabeth (1977, 111), Roy Strong muses, “In short, one begins to wonder whether perhaps Elizabethan portraiture is better regarded as a branch of the study of emblems in the English Renaissance...” This chapter extends Strong’s insight to the emblematic AR portrait, a hauntingly powerful visual evocation of Elizabeth as the alchemical faery queen. It “wonders” further whether this emblems itself is not better regarded as a branch of the study of that seeming grab bag of the Renaissance imagination full of astrology, alchemy, numerology, cabala, etc. here called Geoplatonism. An emphasis on mathematics — specifically geometry — differentiates Geoplatonism from Eratoplatonism, Neoplatonism as it is usually identified. Eratoplatonism is found, for example, in The Courtier (1527) of Castiliogne (1478-1529) and much of Elizabethan poetry, especially the sonnets. The identifying characteristic of Geoplatonism, therefore, is a focus not on love, but on knowledge and especially on the imagination as the organon of transcendence, the object of all Platonisms. Further, this knowledge — gnosis — is identified with geometry as promulgated by Proclus (410-587). However difficult it may be for many to identify geometry with imagination, it was long done as will subsequently be shown. The thought, recognized as such or not, of Proclus permeated the West during the centuries between his death and the Renaissance. It was diffused directly by his edition of or his Commentary on Euclid’s Elements, the relevance of which to Geoplatonism hardly needs to be stressed. The Commentary owes as much to the Timaeus and the Chaldean Oracles, the only two “philosophical” works that Proclus recommended be circulated publically,1 as it does to 

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Pythagoras or Euclid. Important in this diffusion were two writers whose works were up to the Renaissance widely held to be canonical. Both had been decisively influenced by Proclus. They are Boethius (475-525), the author of *inter alia* The *Consolation of Philosophy*, and pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (5th c. AD), the author of *inter alia* The *Celestial Hierarchy*. Dionysius, whoever he was, coined and put into circulation the word *hierarchy*, a feat which, if nothing else, merits him a place in the history of Western thought. The details of transmission of the various forms of Platonism — including Geoplatonism — are beyond the scope of the present work. Fortunately, its purposes can be served by a well known (though ill understood) document, *The Oration on the Dignity of Man* (published 1496) of Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). Although there is no question that other writers are important in this area, it is Pico in *The Oration* who provides a concise presentation of the origins, aspirations and directions of platonizing thought as it circulated in England and the rest of Europe in the 1500's. He was an intimate of the Florentine Academy, the epicenter of the resurgence of Platonizing thought after 1464. Moreover, he had studied in many of the important universities of Europe. This document, which is an introduction to his major work, became such a commonplace in the Europe that in his emblem XCVII — *Doctorum agnomina* [professors' nicknames] — Alciati (1492-1550), the acknowledged creator of the emblem (1531) could make a public joke of the impenetrability which students imputed to Pico's work. The text runs: *Obscurus & Confusus, ut Picus fuit, / Labyrinthus appellabitur* [The professor who is] obscure and confused, as Pico was, will be called the labyrinth. Among those whose allusions to Pico's work show that they knew it well were the two leading Elizabethan writers on Geoplatonism, John Dee (1527-1608), its practitioner and propagator,
and Sir Francis Bacon (1563-1626), its critic and reformer. Together the lives of these gentlemen extend from before Elizabeth's birth to after her death. Although they never mention one another directly, in the small world of Tudor London, they must have known and known of one another. Neither is considered in the context of the imagination because neither is considered a literary figure and imagination mistakenly is considered always to have been, as it is now, exclusively a literary phenomenon. Rather, discussions of them center on the “contributions” which each made to the development of modern science. This approach overlooks the truth in the already cited quip of Harvey, who was one of the first modern scientists, that Bacon wrote science like a Lord Chancellor. In other words, Bacon wrote “science” like what he was. Dee also wrote like what he was, although it is somewhat difficult in his case to say just what that was. Nevertheless, they were both, for all their differences, Arthurian gentlemen in the court of Elizabeth Tudor.

The narrative of King Arthur played an important role in the origins of the Tudor court beginning with Henry VII (1457-1509) and would probably have done so even more had not Arthur himself early on been exposed, to put it tactfully, a Celtic historical fiction. Nevertheless, not only did Henry name his eldest and ill-fated son Arthur, but so did the first Stuart king James I. His elder son was equally ill-fated. King Arthur was to fare better in the national epic of another gentleman Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) who explains in *A Letter of the Authors* that he set out to fashion him in “vertuos and gentle[manly] discipline.” This letter serves as preface to *The Faerie Queen* (Books I-III, 1590). *A Letter* is not in Spenser's first intention a discussion of poetics and topics as is *An Apology for Poetry* by still another gentleman, Sir Philip Sidney (1551-1586). First and foremost, it is an apology for
Edmund Spenser himself. That he makes clear in its first line, saying that he knows "How doubtfully all Allegories may be construed." Just as Milton later found that there was "trouble in Paradise," Spenser had found there was trouble in Faerie Land. Spenser stands squarely in the tradition of allegorical transmission common then in Geoplatonism as elsewhere. As Sidney puts it, "...there are many mysteries contained in poetry, which of purpose were written darkly, less by profane wits it should be abused." The presence of "mysteries" necessitates providing a key which tells the adept wits how to read the work while at the same time thwarting the malicious readings of the profane wits. In the case of Spenser, there was the danger that not only poetry would be abused. Spenser himself was in peril of being abused. To anticipate that eventuality, he supplied *A Letter* as the key to his intended reading.

The immediate purpose of this discussion is to establish the context of the emblem, imagination and the Arthurian gentleman. In that context it is striking that the *methode* Spenser uses to fashion Arthur in "virtuous and gentle[manly] discipline" is continued allegory. One would expect to find the *mimesis* — imitation — of the Aristotle if one followed the lead of conventional history of Renaissance literary theory. Spencer does not mention *mimesis*. He does, however, introduce *commune sense*, the imagination of faculty psychology (1590, 16). Again, this seems odd if *A Letter* is understood to be an Elizabethan discussion of poetics and the topics of "imaginative literature" in the modern sense. The suspicion comes that *A Letter* is not, in the first intention, such a discussion at all. Sidney, in contrast, does state at one point that "Poesy therefore is an art of imitation." Nevertheless he often speaks of imagination in a way that is difficult to reconcile with Aristotelian
orthodoxy. Spenser's choice of *method* was determined by the fact that, as Frances A. Yates in *Astrea* (1975) and Roy Strong in *Gloriana* (1987) have shown, the *Faerie Queene* did not originate in English literature. An even cursory reading of Sidney will reveal that most of what one thinks of as English literature had not yet been written. Rather, she emerged from the inner circle of Elizabeth's gentlemen. This circle in this area included notably the Cecils William and Robert, father and son, John Dee and the almost exact contemporary of Elizabeth, Sir Henry Lee (1533-1610). Lee, whose presence unlike the ubiquitous Dee was very local, was Elizabeth's long time champion and the keeper of the Queen's property at Woodstock just north of Oxford. Woodstock is almost as ubiquitous in Elizabeth's life as Dee himself and the two are at times associated. It was there that during a summer progression in 1575 Lee organized the entertainment which Yates (1975, pp. 88-111) documents as the first public appearance of the persona of the Faery Queen.

Sidney and Spenser were not themselves members of this circle. Sidney, however, was the nephew of Robert Dudley (Earl of Leicester) and was also the philosophical protégé of John Dee. Spenser began his career near its center as the literary protégé of Sidney and Leicester. He ended it on the periphery of the circle on the "Western Front," Ireland, apparently because of a poetic indiscretion which embarrassed Leicester with Elizabeth. Bacon, ironically, figures in this context precisely because despite his birth and gifts he never managed to become a member of Elizabeth's inner circle. Robert Cecil was eventually able to follow his father Burghley as Principal Secretary of State. But, while Elizabeth lived, Bacon was not able to do so in the office of his father Nicholas. Nicholas Bacon had been Lord Keeper of the Seal. For that matter, Bacon did not hold any other important position.
until the accession of James I. One suspects that his lack of success at court was one
important reason that he appears not only as the critic of the exclusively military function of
the gentleman in the image of King Arthur, but also as the critic of the kind of Geoplatonism
promoted by Dee. Bacon proposes to supplement, if not replace, the traditional training with
another kind of training or education. In *The Proficiency and Advancement of Learning II*
(1605) he borrows a metaphor from Virgil's *Georgics* and calls this new training *Georgics*
of the mind (318). Later, borrowing Cicero's translation of the Hellenic philosophy into the
mentality of his Romans, he calls it *cultura animi*, (agri-)culture of the mind or soul (332).
This proposal, the purpose of which was to "instruct and suborn action and an active
[non-military] life" for gentlemen, was to become the modern the concept of culture.

The proposal did not at all mean that the new program for the professional discipline
of the post-Authorian gentleman necessitated the rejection of the tenets of Geoplatonism.
Bacon was too much the Arthurian gentleman himself for that. In fact, he refers to a *locus
classicus* for these tenets:

Plato said elegantly, That virtue, if she could be seen, would move great love and affection; so seeing that she cannot be shewed to the sense by corporal shape, the next degree is to show her to the Imagination in lively representation: for to shew her to the Reason only in subtlety of argument, was ever a thing derided in...many of the Stoics; who thought to thrust virtue upon men by sharp disputations and conclusions, which have no sympathy with the will of man (310, italics mine)

This is a paraphrase with commentary on *Phaedrus* 250D:

For sight is the sharpest of the physical senses, though wisdom [*phronésis*] is not seen by it, for [*phronésis*] would arouse terrible love, if such a clear image [*eidolon*] of it were granted as would come through sight.”
Although the quotation from Bacon occurs in a discussion on rhetoric, Bacon considers it valid for all forms of *poiesis* in that their end is action. As Sidney notes (37) "For as Aristotle sayeth it is not gnosis but praxis must be the fruit [of *poiesis*]." Sidney makes clear that Bacon's ethos of praxis, despite its apparent contradiction of the Geoplatonic gnosis, was not peculiar to him, but was a feature of the ethos of his -- and Dee's -- background.

As Bacon's words show, the centrality of image and imagination had survived the intervening centuries. The interesting point is that where in Bacon it is virtue that is seen, in Plato it is *phronésis* -- mind or will -- which itself is the instrument of the soul. The difference is not so great as might appear at first sight, but it does point up the ambiguity of the appeal of Geoplatonism now to understanding, now to feeling. The effect of "seeing" virtue or *phronésis* is something in the nature of a revelation, but whether this revelation is intellectual or emotional remains a Geoplatonic mystery in the technical sense of the word. There have been and are individuals for whom an intellectual revelation has all the persuasive force of an emotional revelation. Such a person is here called homo geometricus. A lack of understanding for or even the lack of awareness that such a human type exists hampers the understanding of much Renaissance thought. However paradoxical it might seem, the focus on intellectual revelation does not diminish the importance of imagination. Rather, it leads to a distinction between disciplined and therefore licit forms of imagination and ill-disciplined and therefore illicit forms. It makes no difference, however, whether the forms are visual or verbal. The distinction between visual and verbal is not critical of the word because both are processed through the imagination and thus are considered equivalent.
Spenser's Arthur "before he was king" is the "image of a brave knight" who has a dream or vision — a product of the imagination — of the Faerie Queen and is by "her excellent beauty ravaged." He so resolves "to seeke her out" (16). The implication is that a vision induced by reading *The Faerie Queene* will ravish other young gentleman who are at loose ends to do likewise. The "ravishing" vision that Cecil's AR portrait induces is an image of a mature yet youthful woman who seems to be a preternatural being. A nimbus of lacework makes the figure appear to be projected out of the murky chaos of the background. Both the lacework and the image of Elizabeth are created by a numinous light which emanates from the figure itself or, like moonlight, is reflected from it. The figure of Elizabeth seems to emerge from a great cloak, the right side of which is half off. She has only the left sleeve and shoulder on, the rest draping around her back, over her right hip across her lower abdomen.

The effect of radiance of the lighting divides the figure into three visual areas that contrast one with another against the obscure background. The most luminous is the area formed by the flesh tones of the face and bosom; the next, the silvery gray bodice and right sleeve with a pattern of spring flowers; and the last, the great cloak itself, its outside executed in real gold which on the inside lining is lacquered over in a reddish orange. The gradation in luminescence draws the eye to the face, then leads it downward over the bust and bodice to the great cloak producing the impression of falling or sloughing off. The lining of the great cloak is covered with eyes and ears, perhaps visually the most prominent of the sets of symbols in the portrait. The next most prominent are on the left foresleeve of Elizabeth's great cloak and held out in her right hand. On her left foresleeve is a large serpent formed by multicolored rows of jewels which crawls lengthward up toward a bejewelled armillary sphere.
above its head. It holds a heart-shaped ruby in its mouth. In Elizabeth's right hand is a strange semi-transparent golden object in the form of a half circle open downward. The emblematic essence of the portrait is indicated by a cryptic motto painted above the golden object: *non sine sole iris* [not without the sun a rainbow]. The question of the exact meaning of these and other symbols aside for the moment, the portrait vividly illustrates the assertion of Spenser in *A Letter* that magnificence is the “perfection” of all the virtues and contains all of them in itself. If it is true as Spenser has it that Arthur and his deeds set forth magnificence, how much more true must this be of the Faerie Queene herself. This portrait, whatever else it may be, is magnificent.

Spenser attributes his opinion to “Aristotle and the rest” (his only mention of Aristotle). Generations of editors have not found where Aristotle or the rest assert anything of the sort. In fact, Aristotle’s choice is magnanimity, not magnificence. Nevertheless, one assumes that Spenser knew his virtues, especially when it came to the functions of imagination and magnificence in his own thought. This principle applies as well when the question is about his and his contemporaries’ feelings and beliefs, whatever Aristotle and the rest may or may not have said. Spenser explicates in the same place:

> In that Faery Queene I mean glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceive the most glorious and excellent person of our soveraine the Queen, and her kingdom in Faery land.

His ration is: glory (magnificence) is to virtue as the Faery Queen (Gloriana) is to Faery Land as the (glorious) Queen is to her kingdom. The analogy or ratio is clear: the higher is the perfection of the lower and so in a critical sense they are one. Further, the figure of the Faery
Queen mediates between the Queen and glory by giving glory Bacon's corporeal shape and therefore visibility. No wonder Arthur is moved to break a lance in glory's behalf.

In summary, *A Letter* is quintessentially a defense of Spenser himself and his *Methode*, the extended Allegory or dark conceit. Spenser chooses Arthur as the subject because even in Elizabeth's court there is no one who can malign a figure of his stature. The poet has dealt with the obvious [but not explicit] problem that Arthur is a king and Elizabeth is a queen, a circumstance which might bring on some petty-minded speculation about the succession, a touchy matter at best. By writing about Arthur before he was king, Spenser leaves Elizabeth securely on the throne and the future to itself. This is not so self-serving as it may seem. He is only following the example of any number of epic writers who have found some way, if not always for the same reason, to treat their subject under two aspects. All of this is not so serious anyway because the most part of men don't read historical fiction to profit from whatever profit there is in it, but just read “for variety of matter”. If you are a sensible (and somewhat embittered) author, you write what people will read, that which is most plausible [applaudable] and pleasing. However, there are some troublemakers in Faerie Land who want to have things clear. (This is just what Elizabeth doesn't want. If things were clear, it would be evident that the problems she confronted were unsolvable.) It these people have their way, there will be no more intentions wrapped in clouds of *Allegorical devices* but plain talk in precepts or sermons. Spenser alludes not only to the sermonizers who objected to allegory on religious grounds — it was pagan among other things — like Sidney's opponents, but to the preemptors like Bacon who object to Arthurian allegory on the social grounds that it misdirects the energies of gentlemen. At any rate, these, for the time being
a minority, are to be “satisfied with the use of these days, seeing all things accounted by their showes....” The interpretation of this is that, even if you don't write in conundrums, your readers will make them up for you. Everything nowadays must be — and will be — made “delightfull and pleasing to commune sense [imagination]” and if they don't like it you can always give them the old chestnut about examples being better than rules to chew on. One senses in Spenser's words a latent friction among the religious, the administrative reformers and the tradition of the court. At any rate, Spenser thinks commune sense dominates the mind of the court. There remains the problem of decorum. It is not seemly to represent the Queen as riding around, skewering dragons and so on, however worthy and worthwhile that might be in itself. On the other hand, she cannot be seen only as sitting around court presiding over her magnificence. Some way must be found to separate these incongruous aspects so that the incongruity will not make the work ludicrous. They must be treated, literally, discretely. In the case of Arthur this was accomplished by separating his virtues into those of a prince, the moral, and those of a king, the civil, and dismissing the second to the dim future of another possible work. Spencer justifies this strategy on the basis of the practice of previous poets who have written on “historical subjects.” The justification of the second is a master stoke of the copious eclecticism of the Elizabethans. The principle is, in its weak form, that all things correspond or, in its strong form, that there is no such thing as coincidence. There is in copious eclecticism a mixture of hermeneutic sophistication and political pragmatism that is disconcerting to a modern interpreter, especially to one who starts unaware of its assumptions or even with the wrong assumptions. An example: in the first years of Elizabeth's reign, the legal principle of the two bodies of the king, in her case, the two
bodies of the queen, had been introduced. This principle was to resolve difficulties brought on by the status of judges appointed by her sister Mary and just before her death. The question was where the prerogative of one monarch ended and that of the next began. As a practical matter, the question came down to whether or not Elizabeth was obligated to honor the appointments of her dead half-sister. The reality was that the judges in question were largely Catholic and Elizabeth, the governor of the Church of England, found herself faced with the prospect of a heavily Catholic judiciary. The resolution was the result of Elizabeth's good sense in not pushing matters to a confrontation.

It was "determined" that for the purposes of law the king had two bodies, the one personal which dies, the other public which doesn't. The authority of the second carries over from one reign to the next. As convoluted as this means of assuring continuity may seem, it is in effect a tribute to the fact that in the Elizabethans' experience government was always somebody's government. The underlying metaphor of governor, the Greek kubernées [helmsman], was still understood literally enough to be aware that it meant that somebody had to be at the helm of the ship of state.

This was not an intellectual construction. It was an historical fact. What held the government together was personal loyalty to, that is, loyalty to the person of, the monarch. It was not until his Leviathan (1649) that Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the quondam amanuensis of Bacon, proposed to consider the government as a machine and thus the image of its activities could become the machinery of government. Unlikely as it seems, it turns out that the legal principle of the two bodies of the king is also an excellent literary principle for a Poet historicaI who finds himself in Spenser's quandary and needs a plausible explanation:
And yet in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering that she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queen or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull lady, this latter part in some places I do express in Belphoebe, fashioning according to [Raleigh's] owne excellent conceipt of Cynthia (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana.)

Applied to the AR portrait, this suggests that the queen is at one and the same time the Elizabeth Tudor that people see every day at court and the preternatural being on the canvas. One does not wonder that Roy Strong in Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I can speak of whoever did the details of the portrait and Robert Cecil, the “secretary manufacturing the phantasy world in which the Queen during her last years (1987, 157).” It is hard to believe that anyone seeing the seventyish Queen close enough that make-up and attire could not hide the work of time would not be hard pressed to reconcile the two. Nevertheless, that seems to have been the case.

Up to this point A Letter has served as key to the discussion of certain aspects of the emblem, imagination and the Arthurian gentleman as they are found both in it and in the emblematic AR portrait. The emblem conventionally has three parts: picture or symbol, motto, and explication. The AR portrait corresponds to the divisions of the emblem in two of the three parts: it has a picture, obviously a symbol with hypo-symbols of its own, and a motto non sine sole iris, iris being the “rainbow” of the title. Lacking is the commentary and that, one surmises, because the people for whom the portrait was intended did not need a commentary to penetrate its conundrum. Those who did revealed themselves as intruders, Sidney's profane wits. The analysis of A Letter up to this point has taken the first steps toward a key to an interpretation of the AR portrait by demonstrating copious eclecticism
as a principle of construction and interpretation. Having seen what a skilled practitioner like
Spenser could do applying within the limits of two or three pages, the reader will sense what
elaborations are possible given more paper and ink and an intention more far-reaching than
that of self-defense.

The following interpretation of the portrait as an example of copious eclecticism
meets two assumptions: 1) The key to its cipher is to be sought among the symbols of the
portrait itself. This hermeneutic principle derives from the nature of the emblem, the motto
and symbol of which define one another and do not rely a extrinsic text. 2) The conceptual
unity of the portrait is as strong as its visual unity. No matter how disparate the various
symbols may seem, there is an intention in the Spenserian sense that unifies them. Copious
eclecticism sees all truth or truths as one and prefers unity over multiplicity. The two leading
proposals for the interpretation of the portrait are those of Frances A. Yates (1975, 215-19,
220-221) and Roy Strong (1977, 50-52; 1987, 157-161). Strong follows Yates in taking as
his key the *Hymnes to Astrea* by Sir John Davies. These are twenty-six poems the lines of
which begin with the sixteen letters of ELISA BETHA REGINA, giving three stanzas of 5,
5, and 6 lines. The poems deal with Elizabeth as Astrea and make no reference to the portrait
This violates the first requirement above, but among the epithets and flattery there is one that
interesting as a hint in the present context:

Rudnesse it selfe she doth refine,
Euen like an Alchymist diuine;
Rross times of yron turning
Into the purest gold;
Not to corrupt, till heaven waxe old,
And be refined with burning.

At the beginning of this chapter it was noted that Geoplatonism seems to be a sort of grab
bag of astrology, alchemy, cabala, numerology, etc. Leaving the clarification of the relationship among them for later, here is an example of alchemy being used in a metaphor in reference to Elizabeth. A second more general example occurs in Sidney's *Apology*, where he says “[Nature's] world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden [world] (15).” The field of activity of the alchemist -- be he whoever, poet, painter or monarch -- is not restricted to transmuting base metals into noble metals. There are also base people around to be transmuted into noble people and beyond them, a whole world of brass in need of ministration.

These examples gain interest when one remembers that the “rainbow” in the portrait is not iridescent. It has no color whatsoever other than a semi-transparent goldish glow. Yates and Strong following Yates propose that this “rainbow” is a symbol of peace as in Genesis 14. However, if one remembers Spenser and his explanation that his work entitled *The Faerie Queene* actually focuses on Arthur as a prince, one hesitates. Given the habits of copious eclecticism, the work may well be not about what it appears to be about, but may be about something related, perhaps in a way that today would be little suspected. It turns out that, if one looks long enough in esoteric references, the rainbow of Genesis was not the only rainbow current in the 1500's. There was also the “philosopher's rainbow,” a rainbow composed of the three colors -- black, white and red --of the three stages that an alchemical transmutation went through, one supposes, no matter what was being transmuted: metals, people or the world.

This insight provides a starting point for the interpretation of the portrait based on the symbols of the portrait itself, an interpretation which meets the first hermeneutic requirement.
The second, that the unity of the emblem be demonstrated, will take longer, the rest of this work in fact. The investigation will again follow Spenser and divide the portrait into two symbolic levels: the public and the private. The public level is easily established on the basis of the fact that the portrait was commissioned by Robert Cecil whose responsibility as Principle Secretary of State for the personal security of the Queen, to be blunt, put him in the middle of spies, plots and counterplots. This involvement is reflected in the eyes and ears which appear on the inner lining of the greatcloak in the portrait. These, as Yates has shown, go back to the illustration of *Ragione di stato* — reason of state — from Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1593), a figure wearing a robe covered with eyes and ears to denote the necessity of always being alert and having trusted observers and informants, i.e., spies. The most trusted of these were the inner circle of her gentlemen, so that at one level the symbols refer individually or collectively to the members of this circle. So much for the public level. The discussion of the second, private level will investigate the history of the images of Neoplatonism itself. It will begin with the image of the upward crawling serpent on the Faery Queens left foresleeve.
Chapter 3: Images of Geoplatonism

In the last chapter Spenser in his Letter defends himself by anticipating the aspects of The Faery Queen that might bring him complications at court. The malicious were ever ready. He has had to deal with two potential difficulties. First, having decided to write a national epic on the subject of Arthur, Spenser faces questions about the simultaneous existence of a king Arthur and a queen Elizabeth. He disarms Arthur by demoting him chronologically to prince. Second, there is the question of Elizabeth and decorum. This he meets with copiously eclectic verve by invoking the legal principle of the two bodies of the king. Both the dignity and vivacity of Elizabeth were served; Gloriana for the one, Belpheobe for the other. There is still a third prickly question: how to relate the Faery Queen to Arthur. There is no Fairy Queen in the Arthurian narrative as tradition has passed it on. To relate the two Spenser uses an archetypical Geoplatonic image provided by tradition: someone is granted or brings on a vision or dream of some tutelary figure. This chapter deals with two examples of this type of image.

The first, which has direct relevance to Spenser, is the Lady Philosophy from Boethius (586). The second, which lends itself to an elaboration of the legal type, is that of the angels from the image of Jacob's ladder in Pico's Oration (1486). These two images were quite familiar in the 1500's. Elizabeth herself translated the first pages of The Consolation in which the Lady appears and Dee says in his Mathematical Preface that Pico's Conclusions, to which the Oration is an apologetic introduction, is so well known that he's not going to bother to cite it. He assumes, one takes it, that everyone knows it and grants its authority. Of Boethius' Lady, Ernst Curtius says, "Die jungkrautige Greisin des Boethius wirkt...als
visionär geschauter Heilbringerin. In der mittelalterlichen Literatur hat sie zahlericher Nachkommenschaft (1948, 110).” [The youthfully strengthful grey-haired [Lady] of Boethius has the effect of a bringer of salvation who is glimpsed in visions. In the literature of the middle ages she has numerous successors.] Pace Curtius, nowhere does Boethius say that the Lady has grey hair or anything of the sort. Exactly what he did say is clear in Elizabeth's 1593 translation below. In any case, the Faery Queen must have come as a godsend to Spenser given that Elizabeth in 1590 was, if anyone cared or dared to touch the subject, fifty-seven years old.

Spenser thoughtfully makes no mention of age in his presentation: “I conceive Arthur after his long education...to have seen in a dream or vision the Faery Queen, with whose excellent beauty ravished, he awakening resolved to seeke her out (16).” It is the excellence of her beauty, not the beauty itself, that ravishes Arthur. Oddly enough, Spenser himself had been ravished by Chaucer who had parodied the medieval successors of the Lady in The Tale of Sir Topaz. To Spenser, it may have seemed that Chaucer, who makes a cameo appearance in his Canterbury Tales to perform this spoof, had personally transmitted this solution to the Arthur/Elizabeth conundrum. The relevant part of the story occurs in stanza 13 when Sir Topaz, who is too virtuous to get involved with town girls, is out hunting. He tires and decides to take a nap. When he awakens, Chaucer writes, “By God, I dreamt all night, said he, / an Elf-Queen should my mistress be / and sleep beneath my cloak.” He immediately sets out to find one, but finds only a Sweet Faery Land guarded by a giant named Sir Elephant — perhaps one of Spenser's more weighty slanderers — who challenges him. The story stops there but the poet goes on until the host begs him to stop. Here is the vision or dream of
Arthur and his quest for the Elf-Queen, who becomes Lee's Faery Queen, presumably in honor of her land. Geoplatonic tradition merges with the local tradition used by Lee when he introduced the figure of the Faery Queen at Woodstock in 1575 (see p.34 above). Boethius gives a description of the Lady — in Elizabeth's translation — of whom he becomes "aware":

Over my head to stand a woman did appear of stately face, with flaming [glistening] yees, of insight above the comun worth of men; of freshe coulor and unwon [unworn] strength, thogh yet so old she were, that of our age she seemed not to be one; her stature such as could skarse be desemed. For sumewhile she skanted [limited] her[self] to the comen [common] stature of men, strait she seemed with croune of head the heavens to strike, and lifting up the same hier [higher], the heavens themselves she enterd, begOing the sightof lookars on.(1)

This is a Lady Philosophy to conjure with! Her feats are thaumaturgy — wonderworking, not theurgy — god's working. She does not intervene directly. She transforms her size or stature to a human ratio, a celestial ratio, or a supercelestial ratio, the three orders of nature. She can appear to be human size, the size of the heavens, or no size at all, having disappeared into the heavens. For special effects, she is head and shoulders above the Elf Queen and she has obvious affinities with the Faery Queen of the "Rainbow" portrait, a Lady who is a bigger than life, her exact size being difficult to determine because there are no points of reference. There is no doubt that her face is stately and that hereyes glisten with an insight above the common worth of men. Her color is fresh and she emanates a strength that in no way shows signs of lessening or wearing out. Above all, she does not seem to be of time, Boethius' time, Cecil's time or any other time. There is something timeless, even eternal, certainly preternatural about her. Boethius goes on in his description
Ofthes wides [weeds, clothes] in the lowest skirz pi, in the upper side
a theta was read, al woven. And betwene both the lettars, ladarwise,
certain steps wer marked, by wiche from the lowest to the hiest
element ascent ther was. (1)

As if to emphasize her position as a tutelary being, the Lady has woven into her clothing a
ladder at the foot of which is the Greek letter pi and at the top of which is the letter theta.
Lady Philosophy herself or the philosophy of nature is the ladder on the rungs of which the
individual ascends from the elemental world of the senses through and by means of the ratio,
the rational faculty, to the intelligible or intellectual world beyond. The ascent is from
practice (the first letter of which in Greek is pi) to and beyond theory (the first letter of which
is theta). By nature the Geoplatonists did not mean the sum total of phenomena legally
independent of human will by its own “laws” that is the word's implication today. The study
of “nature” to them was the study of this tripartite structure and the crucial question was
whether matter, the four elements, could be or would be bypassed in the ascent.

Geoplatonism posited, in short, a transcending mind/soul in the image of which the
human mind/soul had been created. They were assured of this by the Timaeus as well as, if
they were Jews or Christians, Genesis. They interpreted — in Pico's phrase, man is the
interpreter of nature — “in the image of” to mean that there was a correspondence by means
of which the adept — the individual who grasped this mystery — could ascend transcend, then
descend. Both the up and down facilitated communication by means either of some tutelary
being(s) or the “ladder” itself which they identified with mathematics. This once more is a
complex subject about which more will be said in the appropriate place. But what has already
been said gives some explanation, for example, of John Dee's peculiarities and his implication
in magic of one sort or another. On the one hand, he tried to contact angels by means of an obsidian speculum or reflecting surface — his “ladder” — by scrying [descrying]. On the other hand, he constantly recommends and in fact participates in mathematics both practical and theoretical. Of course, by now one should recognize that when Dee and his colleagues talk about mathematics in the study of nature, they are talking about transcending nature, not quantifying it. The peculiarity, to paraphrase Yates, of the Britannic Renaissance, to designate it so in honor of Dee, is the presence of the Arthurian gentleman, who, while just as avid as any other devotee of Geoplatonism to leave nature behind, somehow manages to turn the attempt into a social program. This particularly evident in the case of Bacon, but the syndrome is present in Dee.

To summarize, the three differentia specifica of the images of Geoplatonism are: 1) the tutelary being(s), 2) the ladder of nature which goes down as well as up, 3) the tripartite structure. As will be shown in the case of Dee, the tutelary being(s) can be present, so to speak, in spirit. They are crucial in that the conundrum of Geoplatonism in its relation to magic and science. The case of Boethius and Lady Philosophy is exemplary. She appears unbidden. There is no indication that Boethius used a magical formula or invocation or ceremony to precipitate her presence. Once there, she does nothing but clarify his situation for him, admonish and exhort him. In so far as theurgy goes, when she disappears into the heavens, she does not take him with her, nor does it occur to Boethius to ask her to do so. She doesn't provide him with any information, occult or other, which might facilitate his escape from the prison in which he was awaiting execution for treason. As for thaumaturgy, although she puts on an overwhelming show on her own behalf, she isn't ready to help him
with magical demonstrations of her power that might move Theoderic to free him. A good example would have been the theurgic and thaumaturgic transformation of a rod into a snake that the Hebraic God provided to Moses and Aaron to impress the Pharaoh in their efforts to free themselves and the Israelites. In her relationship with Boethius, she tends to confine her activities, as she does her size, to the more human ratio for, once he has recognized and accepted who she is, no more is heard of thaumaturgy or theurgy. In sum, there is no suggestion that Boethius can or wants to control her comings and goings. She in turn does not act directly on the material world.

Lest the foregoing should seem facetious, one need only remember the role played by the gods and goddesses, particularly the goddesses, of the Homeric dispensation who, although by pre-Hellenic standards quite anthropomorphic, do not feel themselves obligated to operate within the ratio of mortals. The whole *materièr de Troie* is promoted, produced and stage managed by Hera, Aphrodite and Athena. Athena in the *Odyssey* almost insistently directs the doings of Odysseus and his son Telemachus. She is of particular interest because in the post-Platonic dispensation of the gods, she became the goddess of philosophy and remained so into the Geoplatonic dispensation of Proclus. Therefore she is the first to come to mind as a possible *eminence grise* of Lady Philosophy. Boethius does not identify the Lady, perhaps because of a Roman predilection for divinized abstractions — Victoria, for example — or from an understandable desire to separate philosophy from its origins in Hellenic myth. In *The Iliad* Athena shows a knack for unbidden theurgy — direct intervention — and thaumaturgy — persuasive wonders — that leave the Lady in the shadows. In Book I (189-218) she personally grabs Achilles' arm to keep him from splitting Agamemnon's head.
open and putting a quick end to the story. In Book XVIII (241-260) when Achilles returns to the battle, it is she, not he, who stems the Trojan counter attack which is about to push the Achaeans into the sea. She appears behind him in the heat of the battle as a shrieking giantess, a feat which unearves the Trojans. But clearly the heroes do not need to induce her appearances. But by the time of Proclus and Boethius, the Olympian dispensation was more or less a dead letter. Although Athena as the goddess of Athens and therefore philosophy played a role in the life of Proclus as reported by his biographer Marinus, it was the pre-Hellenic, pre-Homeric Hecate who dominates. Marinus writes (VI):

The protectress of Byzantium, who was the cause of [Proclus'] birth insofar as he was born in that city, delivered him and took him under her protection. Later on, when he had become a lad, she was still concerned about his well being, and appearing to him in a dream, called him to philosophy. Because of this he became so closely related to the goddess, that he was greatly devoted to her worship and obeyed her laws enthusiastically.

The editor L.J. Rosan (1949) expresses the opinion that the “Protectress of Byzantium” is “undoubtedly” a reference to Athena, presumably because of the reference to philosophy. However, Athena was the protectress of Athens, not Constantinople. That goddess was Hecate. Marinus, moreover, does not say that the goddess was the goddess of philosophy, in which case the inference would be Athena, but simply that she called him to philosophy, and “calling to,” like the Lady, was Hecate's function as a tutelary being. A lesser point is that the goddess of birthing in this context was, again, Hecate. If Proclus in his life travels from Constantinople, to Alexandria, to “Asia,” to Athens shows an “enthusiasm” -- a peculiarly appropriate word in the context -- for any one goddess, it is
Hecate. Marinus provides directly or indirectly in his references to the Hecate-filled Chaldean Oracles the examples that document the prominence of Hecate in Proclus' life from beginning to end. In his final section XXXVIII, Marinus writes that Proclus used to say:

If I had the power, I would allow of all the ancient books only the [Chaldean] Oracles and the Timaeus to be preserved, but all the other books I would conceal from the present generation, because those who read them carelessly or without attention can only be harmed.

In a sense, Proclus was granted that power for about a thousand years. As the Latin West became more and more isolated from the Hellenic East after the various Germanic tribes consolidated their imperia, the vehicles of transmission of Platonic theory became mainly three, two of which derive from Proclus. First, there was an incomplete version of the Timaeus itself. Second, there was the Timaeus as found in the hymn Qui perpetua which introduces the pivotal section IX of Boethius' Consolation. This hymn is largely based on Proclus' commentary on the Timaeus and is delivered by the Lady Philosophy, a direct if more sedate descendent of the Hecate of the Chaldean Oracles. Third, there was the work from which Pico's angels in the Jacob's ladder image descend, The Celestial Hierarchy. The author, Dionysius the Areopagite, had converted into Christian angels the Hellenic deities who served Proclus as his tutelary beings.

But, before going on to Dionysius the Areopagite's contribution to Geoplatonic images, the question why Hecate fitted the role so well must be considered. Marinus discusses Hecate, The Chaldean Oracles, and theurgy in ten of the thirty-eight sections of his life of Proclus. In section VI while Proclus is a youth in Byzantium, Hecate in a dream "calls him to philosophy." In IX it is made clear that this happened when he returned to
Byzantium after studying in Alexandria. Section IX has him worship the goddess of the moon — Hecate's realm — in Athens. In XIII, following the admonition of the Chaldean Oracles to study systematically and not "by enormous steps," he writes his Commentary of the Timaeus at twenty-nine. In XVIII he purifies himself according to the Chaldean methods and in XXVI he makes an intense study of the Chaldean Oracles. He reaches the "highest virtues of the human soul" which, Marinus informs the reader, are called theurgic. Proclus gathers all the literature on the Oracles and collates it. In XXXVIII there is a decisive turn: Proclus is no longer dependent on Hecate to appear of her own will. He can himself conjure up "luminous apparitions of Hecate" with which he can converse. He can also make it rain and so saves Athens from a drought. To do this, he uses a wheel to which was attached a wryneck bird. The wheel was a talisman — Greek telesma from telos, end or purpose — an image or object in a form that was believed to accomplish some end, here making it rain. This is an example which might have persuaded Dee that, as will be seen, he could attract astral influences with the proper mathematically derived image, his monas hieroglyphica. The important thing is that Proclus could summon Hecate or at least her powers apparently at will. This approaches magic, the human control of supernatural forces.

From Marinus emerges that Proclus had every reason to put Hecate at the center of his thought. She had been his tutor from birth and the tutor of Byzantium before it became Constantinople. Hecate had been excluded from the world of Homer's Olympians. But their sway did not hold exclusively even in all of the Greek-speaking world. Robert Graves writes, "[T]he Hellenes emphasized [Hecate's] destructive powers at the expense of her creative powers....That Zeus did not deny her the ancient power of granting every mortal his wish is
a tribute to the Thessalian witches, of whom everyone stood in dread (first edition 1955, 124)." The rule of Zeus was contested in the far north in Thessaly where the idea of the polis was less dominant and in Thrace, the location of Byzantium. Graves might have added Boeotia, which the Athenians together with its main city Thebes considered the boondocks.

Boeotia was the home of Hesiod, known as the poet of the helots, who in *The Theogony* could not simply ignore the Olympians. He could, however, surreptitiously contest their exclusivity by devoting to Hecate forty-two lines, a number that otherwise seems excessive. Athena, her olympicised version, and the other Olympians have far fewer. In lines 423-30 Hesiod sets out in detail why Hecate is a goddess to be reckoned -- or conjured -- with:

> She has a share of the privileges of all the gods
> That were ever born of Earth and Heaven.
> *Nor did Kronos' son [Zeus] ever violate or reduce*
> *What she had from the earlier gods, the Titans.*
> Nor does the goddess, since she is an only child,
> Have any less privilege on earth, sea or heaven,
> But all the more since Zeus privileges her. (Italics mine)

Lines 425-6 give the heart of the matter: Zeus and his minions the Indo-European speakers who infiltrated, then invaded the Greece-to-be in waves from about 2000 to 1200 BC never assimilated or domesticate Hecate as they had Athena. They did manage to exclude her from areas in which they held sway, Greece proper and handbooks of classical mythology. Zeus ruled only in heaven and on earth, because he was obligated by his weakness to relegate the sea and the underworld to his bothers Poseidon and Hades respectively. As an "only child" (428) with no siblings Hecate knows no such limitations. Not only does she have her own authority undivided, but "Zeus privileges her (l.430)". As a result of the two, "Whom she will, she greatly aids and advances (l. 430-1)". Importantly
for in the present context, she had received “a province of the starry heaven” (416) as her own. That was the sublunary world, which included the moon and all below it, which is why Marinus reports Proclus as worshiping the moon on every occasion. The moon occupies a position intermediary between the earth and heavens. Thus there were three regions, the sublunary, the lunar, and the translunar. This is a prototypical Geoplatonic triadic structure which differs from the Aristotelian bipartite sublunary and superlunary, a structure so often considered to be the only one current in the British Renaissance. The lunar was the province of Hecate, an excellent venue in which to be a tutelary or transitional goddess between the elemental and the (super)celestial. As can be seen, Hecate in Hesiod already shows the three Geoplatonic differentia specifica: 1) she is a tutelary being, 2) she occupies a middle position in a ladderlike structure, 3) the structure — terrestrial, lunar (celestial), (super)celestial — is tripartite.

These elements are found in a somewhat different perspective in the second image of copious eclecticism to be discussed in this chapter, the Jacob’s ladder of Pico. In the Oration Pico, like Spenser in A Letter, is defending himself against the malicious at court, this time in 1486 before a Papal commission in Rome. Pico is another figure like Dee whose life puts in question the possibility of drawing a clear line of demarcation — except as a convenience — between the Renaissance and whatever the eras before and after are to be called. In a way, his disputation is a predecessor of that of Martin Luther in 1517, with the difference that he had 900 theses to dispute and not 95. His was to be the Armageddon of disputations, the end of internecine bickering among Christians and with non-Christians. It was to be a Revelation of Revelations (16:16). Pico was, with the modesty befitting a Geoplatonist, convinced that
he had found the key to "the causes of things, the ways of nature, and the plan of the
universe, God's counsels and the mysteries of heaven and earth (34)." Where Luther, initially,
wanted to reform the Church, Pico in effect was going to superannuate it. After the
divulgence of his elixir of Geoplatonism and Cabala, the Church would be unnecessary
because he would have resolved all the questions that it had been confronted with only
grudging success since Christ's death. There would be no more heretics, the Jews would be
converted, and even the number of sinners, at least ones intelligent or educated enough to
grasp his proofs, would be limited. All in all it seemed to be a good thing, but the commission
didn't think so. It denounced thirteen of his theses as heretical. He had failed his first test;
he did not convince even his own co-religionists of the validity of his claims. The public
disputation never took place, but a setback never disheartened a Geoplatonist and he
continued his career until he died at thirty-three.

Much of the prominence of the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* is due to Jacob
Burckhardt who in *Die Culture der Renaissance in Italien* (1860) not only identified the
"renaissance" as an object of study, but as much as made the Pico of the *Oration* its prophet.
One can only wonder how far past the title he read. The interest in Hermes Trismegistis and
Geoplatonism in general simply was not as pronounced then as it is today. Otherwise one is
at a loss to explain how Burckhardt missed that in his first paragraph Pico has Hermes
Trismegistus give a ringing endorsement of his undertaking by citing the exclamation "What
a great miracle is man." from the Latin *Asclepius* (I, 6a). He may have taken the reference
as a rhetorical strategy as is the reference to Hermes Trismegistus in the beginning of the first
book of *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). There Bacon attributes to James I the
“triplicity” of Hermes: “the power and fortune of a King, the knowledge and illumination of a Priest, and the learning and universality of a Philosopher.” Although it attests that the fading splendor of Hermes could still serve for a flattering comparison, this encomium carries little personal conviction. But that was over a hundred years later when Hermes has lost the dazzle of novelty. In Pico’s day, things were very different.

Granting the above explanation, it is still difficult to see how, even after overlooking Hermes, anyone at all aware of the background could miss the repeated references to Dionysius the Areopagite — there are four of them by name, far more than anyone else — and the central images that stem directly or indirectly from his work. Like Hermes Trismegistus before him and Geoffrey of Monmouth after him, Dionysius, whoever he was, is an exemplar of the transcendent forgery that plays such an important part in the history of the period. Dionysius went Geoffrey one better. Geoffrey forged a personality, Arthur, but Dionysius forged a persona, himself. One imagines that one day some five hundred years after St. Paul’s death, some one, probably in Syria, read the passage where Paul says that he was all things to all men. That person, whoever he was, realized that Paul had neglected Geoplatonists and, with this text as justification, set out to make good the oversight. He wrote a number of works under the name of Paul’s best known Greek convert Dionysius, a judge in Athens. In these works, he adapted the thought of Proclus to Christianity — or vice-versa — and when he later somehow became identified with St. Denis, an important saint in France, in the 900’s, his authority was set. To establish his credibility, he wrote a number of letters to members of the apostolic generation, Timothy among them, and claims to have been present at the crucifixion and describes the eclipse at the death of Christ (Letter 7.2). He was also, he
writes, at the death of Mary with St. Peter and St. James (Divine Names, 3.2). The origin of the Corpus Hermeticum is somewhat different in that the texts attributed to Hermes were written over the first and second centuries A.D. by a number of authors who, in comparison to Dionysius, lack imagination. The Hermetic texts that have survived did so, it seems, by accident of editorial choice.6

Early on in the Oration Pico takes up a theme dear to the Geoplatonic heart and corroborated by I John 4:20: it is not given to us "flesh as we are" to love what we have not seen. This is a permutation of the "if we could see virtue..." theme. "How could anyone love or judge what he does not know?" Pico asks rhetorically. He goes on to say that Moses had loved the God whom he had seen on Mount Sinai. Moses ascent of Mount Sinai was, for reasons which need not be explained, a favorite proof text of the Areopagite and plays an important role throughout the Oration. Pico then makes a central point in Geoplatonism: "We cannot reach such knowledge on our own." There must be some sort of tutelary being(s). To find out which one(s) we must follow the "ancient Fathers," who turn out to be Paul and Dionysius the Areopagite. Pico cites Paul's vision (2 Corinthians 12:2) when Paul is rapt to the third heaven and asks, rhetorically, what he saw. Providentially, Dionysius has the answer ready in The Celestial Hierarchy. Pico leaves Moses for the moment and for the sake of copiously eclectic ecumenicism — after all, one of Pico's main purposes was the conversion of the Jews to Geoplatonic Christianity — he introduces the ancient father Jacob and his heavenly ladder. This is a ladder is already familiar from Lady Philosophy's dress:
Jacob...who though sleeping in the lower world still had his eyes fixed on the world above...will admonish us...by a figure, for all things appeared in figures to the men of those times: a ladder rises by many rungs from earth to the height of heaven and at its summit sits the Lord, while over its rungs move the contemplative angels, alternately ascending and descending (16-17).

This image again illustrates the tripartite structure and the Geoplatonic tendency to copious eclecticism. Pico writes echoing 1 Corinthians 10:11 “...for all things appeared in figures to men of those times...” This means that to Pico the figurative meaning is not necessarily what it was to the men of those times in their literal context. To the Geoplatonist all figures from scriptures of whatever provenance are there to be cut and pasted almost at will. The ancient father Jacob is lifted from his biblical field between Beersheeba and Haran (Gen. 28:10-22) and transported to a more Geoplatonic setting, “that court beyond the world closest to the most exalted Godhead (12).” In the first figure, he was granted a dream vision in which the Lord confirmed him in possession of the land he slept on and promised him that he would be a patriarch with progeny “like the dust of the earth.” In the second, Pico’s interpretation focuses primarily on the ladder and the angels who, happy coincidence, are the instruments of God’s communication. Jacob’s sleeping itself acquires a Geoplatonic significance in that while sleeping in the “world” below, the eyes of his body are closed. Some other eyes, presumably Platonic inner eyes of his soul, are fixed on the “world” above. The angels themselves, who as before ascend and descend the ladder, have now become Dionysius' “contemplative” angels. Near the top, the places are occupied by the Seraphim followed in descending order by the Cherubim, and the Thrones. Each has a specific function: “the Seraphim burn with the fire of Charity; from the Cherubim flashes forth the splendor of
intelligence; the Throne[s] stand firm with the firmness of justice.” The three orders of angels constitute Dionysius’ concept of a hierarchy. He writes, “The goal of a hierarchy is to enable [all] beings to be as like as possible to God and to be at one with him (CH 165 A).” Dionysius is to be taken at his word; he specifies the three rungs or steps which, in ascending order, lead to the Godhead or “as like as possible” to it (which would be Godhood itself) purification, illumination and perfection. These correspond to the three angelic orders Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim.7 Historically, the origin of the Dionysius’ hierarchical structure, and with it the Geoplatonic image, is derived from the following correspondences: 1) the tutelary being(s) = the law of the inclusive middle term; 2) the ladder of nature = the cycle of emanation -- immanence, procession and return; 3) the tripartite structure = the multiple levels of parallel structures that mirror one another (Dodds, 1933, xix). It is important to recognize the existence of these parallel structures because not doing so hampers the understanding of Dee’s work. The first term of each correspondence derives one way or another from Hesiod, the second from Plato’s Timaeus via Proclus. The law of the inclusive middle term is in Timaeus 31c:

But it is not possible that two things alone should be conjoined without a third; for there must needs be some intermediary bond to connect the two. And the fairest bond is that which most perfectly unites into one bond both itself and the things which it binds together, and to effect this in the fairest manner is the natural property of proportion [analogia italics mine]

This “law” stipulates that the middle term, Plato’s intermediary bond, must unite into one both itself and the things which it binds together. He proposes that this is best done by proportion, a subject about which Dee is so eloquent. To be succinct, Plato has in mind a
three term proportion such as \(a:b::b:c\) or \(1:2::2:4\). Conceptually, \(b\) has in itself both something of \(a\) and something of \(c\) which allows it to be the bond between the two of them. Perhaps the concept is clearer in the case where it is evident the 2 is twice one and 4 is twice 2, so 2 "participates" in 1 as 4 "participates" in 2. Or, conversely, 1 is present in 2 as 2 is present in 4, which geometrically — things that are equal to the same thing are equal to one another — would mean that 4 participates in 1 or that 1 is present in 4. The middle term therefore corresponds to the tutelary being, in fact is a tutelary being, in that it communicates between the first element and the last element through a term that includes both. It is the transitional unit of the unitary universe. That the three characteristics of the Geoplatonic image are actually the same characteristic expressed three different ways is now evident. The ladder of the second characteristic is the transition imagined as vertical — ascending and descending — rather than as circular in the more common image of emanation, procession, return. The correspondence is that the proportion is reversible, that is \(a:b::b:c\) means that \(c:b::b:a\). That the tutelary being can come down means that the tutored being can go up. In terms of the conundrum of the one and the many, that 1 can produce 2 and 2 can produce 4 means that 1 can be approached through 4. The one is present in the many and the many participate in the one. The third characteristic simply extends the image of proportion, for example, \(1:2::4:8::8:16::16:32\). The result of this progression is a "rational" universe because it is constructed of overlapping ratios. Theoretically, with the right ratio, it should be possible to start with any number — or as will be seen "figure"— and work back to the one only and only one, Dee's monas. Pico explains, "Therefore the Cherubim are the intermediaries and by their light equally prepares us for the fire of the Seraphim and the judgment of the Thrones."
This is the bond which unites the highest minds, the Palladian order which presides over contemplative philosophy (14-15).” The foregoing discussion makes clear that When Pico writes "contemplative philosophy" he has something more dramatic in mind than is usually understood by that term, something involving “contemplative” angels and Godhood or at least Godlikeness.

This confluence of geometry, which in the conventions of the late 1900's is considered a rational exercise, and imagination, which is not, strikes the modern mind as odd. However, in terms of the tradition which Proclus articulates, the coincidence is the norm. The modern convention is the outcome of the discussions which begin in Bacon and his successors, notably Descartes and Kant. Proclus writes in A Commentary on Euclid’s Elements:

The thinking in geometry occurs with the aid of imagination. Its syntheses and divisions of figures are imaginary. But if it should ever be able to roll up its extensions and figures...[t]his achievement would itself be the perfect culmination of geometrical inquiry, truly a gift of Hermes, leading geometry out of Calypso's arms, so to speak, to more perfect intellectual insight and emancipating it from the pictures projected on the imagination (44-45)

In terms of the law of the inclusive middle term, the imagination mediates between the individual mind/soul and the universal mind/soul. In that sense, it is positive for as everybody from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas (Yates 1966, 32 ff) assures, it is impossible to think without images. Geometry is imaginary in the best sense because it facilitates the ascension of the individual mind/soul to the universal mind/soul. But imagination is also negative in that it tends to take on a life of its own. In Proclus' image, it is like Calypso who, because of her
passion for Odysseus, holds him prisoner in her charms and prevents his returning to his true home with Penelope in Ithaca (Odyssey V 13 ff.). Similarly, the Geoplatonist sees the danger that the imagination will cease to be the inclusive means to transcendence and, excluding other levels of being, will become an end in itself, like Calypso a servant of the passions. In short, imagination must transcend itself, its own images, in order to "see" mind itself. Given that Proclus is the prototypical Geoplatonist, this can be done only with the aid of a tutelary being, this time Hermes who (Odyssey V, 55 ff.) is sent by Zeus to Calypso to deliver the command that she free Odysseus.

Calypso, or more accurately her figure, appears in the Oration also. There Pico is making the point that the essence of angelhood is not that an angel has no body, but that the angel has a spiritual rather than a human intelligence. A man "who is bedazzled by the empty forms of imagination as by he wiles of Calypso" is therefore a slave to the senses, although he has human intelligence, i.e. reason, he is less than a man: he is a brute (10). The Lady Philosophy is more direct in her characterization. When she sees the Muses of Poetry sitting beside Boethius' bedside and dictating to him, her eyes fire up and she asks angrily who let these "hysterical sluts" in the room. Collecting herself a little after giving her justification for her epithet -- they lead men to indulge their passions rather than expunge them -- she once again waxes Homeric (Odyssey XII) and calls them "sirens" (I.36) Spenser's contrast in A Letter (16) between good discipline "delivered in the way of precepts or sermoned at large" and good discipline "thus clowdily enwrapped in Allegorical devises" suggests reservations about the imagination in the form of "commune sense." The clearest statement of reservations is found in Sidney's Apology when he demands from poetry that its imagination
be *eikastiké*, one that gives the proper image of things and not *phantastiké*, one that favors the presentation of "unworthie objects." The recognition of the distinction between the two forms of imagination, for want of better terms, the object-centered Proclean, and the self-centered phantastic is crucial for understanding of what follows.

The discussion of the Geoplatonic image up till now provides the concepts in terms of which to approach the symbolism of the "Rainbow" portrait. The largest single symbol in the portrait is the ascending serpent on Elizabeth's left foresleeve. Studied in terms of Geoplatonic images it has three parts: the tutelary being, the snake, the ladder, the body of the snake itself, knotted in the form of infinity, which ascends to the third element, the armillary sphere which hangs over its head. This analysis is confirmed by the emblem of Intelligenza in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1593, 1603). Here the Lady Intelligence is the tutelary being who leads men up from the senses through reason to the highest knowledge — intelligence. She holds her left hand (in which she has a snake) down and her right hand (in which she has a sphere) up. She is looking at the sphere and on her head she has a garland of flowers. The relevant things brought out in the text are that the Lady Intelligence demands from us that union which our mind makes with the things understood by her. She is dressed in gold because she wants to be far from the knowledge of the vulgar and the plebeian, [the knowledge] that distinguishes everything by the single quality of gold. The armillary sphere and the serpent show that, in order to understand high things, it's necessary to crawl on the earth like the serpent and in our understanding to become familiar with the principles of earthly things which are less perfect than the heavenly. Therefore she has a snake in her left hand and a sphere in her right. The flowers show that by her nature to
understand her is the perfection of the soul. This lady looks familiar and it is difficult to believe that she is not another surreptitious manifestation of Hecate. Be that as it may, Ripa's description makes it clear that the snake/sphere symbol is copiously eclectic. Although Ripa does not identify the source, the snake/sphere contrast comes from 26:13 of the Book of Job, an important book in the Geoplatonic bible and a favorite for proof texts. The text “By his spirit [God] has garnished the heavens; his hand has formed the crooked serpent” is cited in support of astronomy by Bacon in the first book of *The Advancement* where the Book of Job is recommended as “pregnant and swelling with natural philosophy (97).” It is a striking example of copious eclecticism in that it bypasses any other significance of the snake in the Judeo-Christian tradition without comment. An aspect of the snake that is especially significant is its color scheme which is formed from black, white and red — black stone, probably jet, white pearls and red rubies. Lewy reports in another context (1956, 292) that a late non-Chaldean *Oracles* glorifies Hecate as the mistress of the three elements: “the fiery ether, the white radiant air and dark earth.” The three colors therefore are associated with the three elements ruled according to Hesiod by Hecate. The elements also form a “ladder” which emphasizes Hecate’s tutelary role. This correspondence would explain Elizabeth’s passion for pearls, which besides their astral significance, represent Hecate’s venue the moon. There are further aspects of the snake/sphere to be discussed as well as the portrait as a whole. But it is time to discuss John Dee.
Chapter 4: Images of Dee

Dee and Bacon both left self-conceived images of themselves behind. But, while Bacon had to commission others to execute his emblems, Dee himself was a competent draftsman. He not only conceived but also carried out his own images. The most informative of these is the self-portrait which he doodled on his genealogy sometime before 1570. The conjectured date is based on the comparison of its elements with those of the title pages of his two major works the Propaedeumata Aporistica, two editions 1558 and 1568, and the Monas Hieroglyphica of 1564. The deletions and additions which the mottos undergo through 1558, 1564, 1568 in these title pages together with other changes cover the first decade of Dee's thought after Elizabeth's accession. A second “decade” runs from the 1570 Mathematical Preface to his 1583 departure for a five year absence on the continent with the Polish Count Laski.

The structure of Dee's genealogical self-portrait brings to mind Ripa's emblematic Intelligenza. Dee draws himself dressed in what one takes to be his professorial finery holding an unidentifiable book in his left hand and in his right a pointer. On his left is his gentleman's patent, a of arms identified as insignia Johannis Dee. On its left side is the figure of the Red Dragon which in Geoffrey represents the “British” people and otherwise represents Wales. Dee's background was Welsh and he claimed, as did Henry VII, to be related to the early Welsh king Cadwallader and through him distantly to the Tudors and so to Elizabeth herself. As if to drive the point home, at Dee's left hand is the boar of Cornwall, the armorial beast of Arthur's home. To call Dee an Arthurian gentleman is not just an epithet. He believed that he and the Tudors were direct descendants of the Arthurian line.

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On Dee's right hand side his pointer indicates an emblematic cartouche which holds a stone of some sort with a shiny black surface, certainly Dee's scrying [descrying] speculum of cannem. Cannem is hard coal which like jet takes the high polish needed for jewelry and the reflecting surface that provides the images to be interpreted in scrying. The motto above reads *De super caelestes roretis aquae et terra dabit fructum suum* (see p. 76 below for translation). Like Ripa's *Intelligenza*, Dee has placed himself between the lower, "Britain," the court, etc., and the higher, the theurgy represented by the scrying stone. He is a magus in the sense that, to borrow a phrase from Pico (57) "the magus is the minister of nature and not merely its artful imitator." Henceforth, to banish the bootless question whether Dee was a "magus" or a "scientist" whatever they might be, he will be called a theurgist, theurgy being the general term for what he wanted to do. The word *magic* with all its connotations will not appear unless it is used in a quotation. But Dee is not only a minister of nature, he is also a minister of Elizabeth, holding the special if irregular portfolio of Queen's [natural] philosopher or theurgist. His position is like but subordinate to that of Hecate in Hesiod. This dual aspect of Dee is the subject of this chapter, first his role as "minister" to Elizabeth and second his role as "minister" to nature.

It is vital even at the risk of tedium to reiterate that Dee was an insider at the Tudor court. His father Rowland held what nowadays seems a trivial post with Henry VIII, gentleman sewer. *The Dictionary of National Biography* (Vol V, 721-9) quotes that the father was treated "indifferently" at court, a word which in the 1500's meant *like everyone else*. In other words, he and his son, however peripherally, were an accepted part of the court. In all Dee's many years of writings in which the polemical and apologetic are...
prominent it is always his services and never his person that he complains the court does not recognized. When he attends Cambridge (1542-46) there is no hint that he was a scholarship student or in any way socially inferior to his classmates. He was admitted a foundation fellow of his college in 1546 and when Henry VIII signed the patent to found Trinity College in that year, Dee was nominated one of the original fellows and under-reader of the “Greek tongue.” This is not to suggest that Dee made his way academically by favoritism rather than merit, but his background certainly was no impediment. All the contrary, he was not only outstanding in the study of Greek and mathematics — which then meant largely Euclid — but he also showed a shrewd sense for the academic wave of the future. The study of Greek was all the rage in the academy then, in part at least because Erasmus had lectured at Cambridge during his last stay in England (1509-1514.) The life of Erasmus would suggest two things to an upcoming young man with a linguistic and mathematical bent: first the philological Renaissance and second, the possibility of a career as an independent international scholar. In the successive phases of methods and organons, Erasmus became the leader of the philological phase when he established a definitive text of the Greek New Testament, his *Novum Instrumentum* [instrumentum is Latin for *organon*]. This work was partially written while he was at Cambridge.

Philology is prominent in Dee's life work; he is often concerned with collecting and authenticating texts in order to substantiate the claims of his other activities. The international career is if anything more prominent than philology. The first thing Dee did when he took his B.A. was to head for the continent and Louvain. Erasmus had taught at Louvain. There he made contact with Gemma Frisius and Gerard Mercator, the leading scholars in applied
mathematics in the fields of geography and navigation. When he returned to England in a few months, he brought back with him Frisius' astronomer's staff of brass and the astronomer's ring of brass as well as two great globes constructed by Mercator. This acquisition and importation is the striking first instance of the lifelong bent for the technological transfer which Dee practiced so conscientiously. Dee realized, as does anyone familiar with the condition of England during his lifetime, that his country was a technological backwater. This began with the general lack of the elementary mathematical knowledge needed for everyday crafts as well as for geography and navigation, the "practical" areas he specialized in. This knowledge gap was especially evident in what one might call the "higher" technology of theurgy. Competence in these areas was a matter of national survival in a hostile and well-armed world dominated more and more since 1492 by the Spanish. Dee pursued his international career not only for his own sake but also for the sake of the Arthurian Britain which he envisioned for Elizabeth, a kingdom whose very physical existence was threatened by England's technological backwardness. The euphoria which he exhibits over his various perceived successes will seem somewhat less egotistical if it is kept in mind that his concern is not only for his reputation, which will take care of itself if he is right, but for the prominence and very survival of his country.

Frisius' astronomers' ring, better know as the armillary sphere, was a strong interest of Dee's. He was also, as far as one can tell, the only one to have such a strong personal interest in it that he almost identifies himself with it. This is the first clue that relates Dee directly to the armillary sphere of the AR portrait. Some effort has already been made to show the lifelong relationship of Dee to the Tudors. After taking his M.A. in 1548, he again
went to the continent, first to Louvain, then in 1550 to Paris, returning to England in 1551. Once home, he was introduced to William Cecil, who was then Private Secretary of State to Edward VI. After Edward's death and Mary's accession Dee was to become a textbook example, the textbook being Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (*Acts and Monuments*, ed. Townsend, vii, 638-41, 681, 756), of everything thought to be bad about Mary's Catholic reign, from Catholicism itself to his own alleged wizardry. Ultimately though, his notoriety had to do with his involvement in the "Woodstock affair" of 1554-5.

There had been a plot to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne instead of Mary. Mary suspected that Elizabeth had been involved but could prove nothing. Nevertheless, she had her held under house arrest at Woodstock where Elizabeth in 1554 spent her twenty-first birthday. Among the few personal servants she was allowed were Catherine Parry, her longtime nurse and governess, and her husband Thomas, Elizabeth's cofferer. Dee was Catherine Parry's first cousin, another indication of a longtime familiarity with Elizabeth. Foxe's description of Elizabeth's travails during this episode gave it a far greater importance than is recognized. During Elizabeth's reign his work was put in all churches where was almost required reading along with the Bible.² Foxe reports that, outdone with her half-sister, one day Elizabeth took a diamond and scratched into a window pane:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Much suspected, by me}
\textit{Nothing proved can be}
\textit{Quoth Elizabeth, prisoner.}
\end{quote}

This challenge, directed at her captors, still holds its sting. The intent to frustrate revelation it declares is often felt by anyone writing about her. Nevertheless, evidence occasionally turns up. Strong (1987, 138) introduces into his discussion a French psalter.
given to Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her wedding in 1947. He writes that it appears her namesake, Elizabeth I, gave it to some unknown recipient while she was a princess. The evidence is, however, that Elizabeth I was not the donor but was the unknown recipient and that she received the psalter during her captivity at Woodstock. The presumptive donor was, though in what capacity is not entirely clear, John Dee. The Calendar of State Papers preserves an incident involving Thomas Parry and two books. Parry's son-in-law John Fortescue sent Elizabeth some books to help her pass the time. Her keeper did not want to pass them on to her because the feared that they might contain ciphered messages. He wrote to Mary and her council for instructions. Mary, who had herself been held virtual prisoner during her half brother Edward's reign and had read classics for consolation and fortification, wrote back that Elizabeth was to be allowed "any book that is honest and sufferable to read or pass her time withal." Mary did not refer specifically to the Parry volumes one way or another. The two were a volume of the Psalms and Cicero's De Officiis, two works that fit the requirements "honest and sufferable" beyond question.

A number of things indicate that the book of Psalms Mary refers to was the one that almost exactly 400 years later was given to Queen Elizabeth II as a wedding gift in 1947. Some evidence is circumstantial. It is known that Dee was in contact with Elizabeth; he was imprisoned and tried for just that. It is known that Dee was related to the Parrys and was in the best possible position to communicate with Elizabeth through them. Then, one comes to direct evidence. On one page there is a drawing of an open book on which stands an armillary sphere. On the pages of the book is written verbum domini, the word of the Lord. The motto in Italian below is Miser è chi speme in cosa mortale pone [hapless is he who puts
his hope in things mortal], a clear enough sentiment. The sphere is drawn in the draftsman's style of Dee as can be seen by comparing it with other of his drawings, the title page of GaRM, for example. The drawing itself is an emblem based on the commonplace of the two books of the word of God, scripture and nature. Psalm 19:1 supplies the proof text: “The heavens declare the glory of god; and the firmament showeth his handiworks.” But, if one looks at the sphere closely, one sees something that is not so commonplace. The plane of the ecliptic, the zodiac, has its zenith in the north for the winter solstice and its nadir in the south for the summer solstice. Proceeding westward — picture left — one comes to the vernal equinox which falls under the sign of Virgo August 23-September 22. Elizabeth’s birthday was September 7 which puts her squarely in Virgo, whose planet, incidentally, is Mercury, the Roman equivalent of Hermes (any reference to Hermes would be irresistible to a Geoplatonist like Dee). The interpretation of this emblem is that the word of God (nature) says that Virgo is rising. This is just the sort of thing that Elizabeth's hopes would swell with joy at seeing. In this light, her reaction recorded on the opposite page does not seem at all exaggerated:

No croked legge, no blered eye no part deformed out of kinde nor yet so ouglye half can be as the inward suspicious minde
Your lovinge maistres.
Elizabeth.

There is no reason on the face of it to assume that this outburst was addressed to anyone but Dee. After all, he was to narrowly avoid being burned at the stake for his part in
whatever intrigues were going on around Elizabeth. Ironically, he seems to have avoided that fate by reconciling himself with the Catholic bishop to whom he had been remanded on charges of heresy. John Foxe could not forgive him for circumventing a martyr's death and wrote about him with an animosity that has influenced the reputation of Dee to this day. A last and conclusive piece of evidence is provided by Sherman (1995, 109). There he reproduces Book II, sections 87-89 of Cicero's De Natura Deorum in Dee's copy along with his marginalia and drawings. The relevant part of the text runs:

Our friend [the philosopher] Posidonius has recently made an [armillary] sphere which in its revolution shows the movements of the sun and stars and planets, by day and night, just as they appear in the sky. Now if someone were to take this [armillary] sphere and show it to the people of Britain or Scythia, would a single one of those barbarians fail to see that it was the product of a conscious intelligence?

In the right hand margin Dee has penned a tiny drawing which is labeled "Posidonius' sphere." Small as the drawing is, the similarity in style between it and the psalter drawing jumps in the eye. If one accepts that there is no such thing as coincidence -- the leading principle of copious eclecticism -- the evidence is irresistible. The barbarian Britains would not only not fail to see that the armillary sphere was the product of a conscious intelligence as is the universe it represents, but at least one of them, Dee, would see that the conscious intelligence had further plans of which Elizabeth was a part. Such a revelation to any Geoplatonist would be a clear instance of unbidden theurgy. That the "revelation" was coincidence would be something one would be reluctant to accept, all the more so if one tended to reject coincidence on principle. The armillary sphere as symbol is one important outcome of the Woodstock year, but not the only one. There are others related not to Dee's
psalter but to Cicero's *De Officiis* which bear mentioning. The first relates to Lee, who as soon as Elizabeth came to the throne, was appointed ranger [arranger] of Woodstock. Some seventeen years later in 1575, again at Woodstock, he introduced the persona of the Faery Queen as already noted (p. 34 above). His principal office in the Ciceronian sense, it will be remembered, was Queen's champion at Accession Day tilts. In these tilts he fought under two *noms de guerre*, Loricus and Laelius. The first derives from the Latin for breastplate or bulwark, *lorica*, and the second was the name of the close friend of Scipio Africanus, Cicero's hero. Laelius, whose friendship with Scipio is the subject of Cicero's *De Amicitia*, was known for his love of letters and philosophy. He is described in *De Officiis* as an example of *multa hilaritas* [lots of fun]. The name Laelius, if anglicized it would come out Lee-lius, may explain how Lee, who claimed to be Elizabeth's illegitimate half-brother, came to be the ranger, of all places, of Woodstock and why Elizabeth from time to time went back to Woodstock, which by all accounts was not a place anyone would want to go a first time. Otherwise, it is a fitting *non de plume* for Lee himself wrote and staged the debut of the Faery Queen.

There are two further points in *De Officiis* that bear on Elizabeth and her relationship with her gentlemen. The first has to do with the importance of her leadership in society. "I set it down," Cicero writes, "as the peculiar function of virtue to win the hearts of men and attach them to one's own service(II.18)." This is neither an Hellenic nor a Christian idea of virtue, although it would not conflict with either if men were to follow someone because he or she were virtuous. A second non-Hellenic, non-Christian attitude expressed by Cicero is his praise of Quintus [Fabius] Maximus known as Fabius Cunctator, Fabius the延期.
Cicero quotes Ennius, "One man — and he alone — restored our res publica by delaying (I, 84)." Ennius goes on to praise Fabius for not being concerned about his personal fame, something that no Hellenic poet would have done, although a Christian poet might have done so — after making clear that from the Christian standpoint he had done the right thing for the wrong reason. Here is found an origin in literature for Elizabeth's policies if such were necessary. Dr. Johnson once remarked that nothing clears the head like the prospect of being hanged in the morning. For her entire life Elizabeth faced a similar prospect or worse. Nevertheless, one intuits that the year of her twenty-first birthday spent with these two books in captivity at Woodstock was crucial in her life.

Dee's coat of arms provides further evidence. The coat of arms itself refers to Dee's past. His genealogy, the cartouche on his right, refers to his future, "natural" philosophy, the then name for astrology. Dee openly entered that field in 1558, the year of Elizabeth's accession, with the publication of his Propaideumata aphoristica [An Aphoristic Introduction, hereafter PA]. The title places Dee squarely in the tradition of esoteric or occult transmission. Strictly speaking, occult [L. ob-celare, to hide well] refers to the not manifest powers which were characterized as hidden and not to the hidden transmission of the putative facts about those powers. One must keep in mind how little about the inner workings of nature would be manifest were it not for the efforts of the likes of Pico, Dee, Bacon, etc., right or wrong, and therefore how much is in effect occult. There is no one, for example, who has "seen" gravity. The question at issue is not whether there are occult powers, ones which we know only by effects and not by origins, but how to access them. It was not the "mistake" of the Geoplatonists to believe that there is an order or structure
behind and beyond the visible or sensible universe. That has always been a necessary working assumption of human beings and is still so today. In the perspective of history, their tenacity, their pigheadedness, in pursuing an effective way to access the manifestly occult powers of nature takes on an heroic aura.

The tradition of esoteric or occult transmission has three main instruments of interpretation: 1) the classical *hypnoia* or underlying sense by which the Stoics justified the allegorical interpretation of the *Odyssey* and later Augustine that of the Pentateuch, 2) the secret oral traditions of the Pythagoreans and of the Cabala which Ezra purportedly wrote down after the Return in 458 B.C., and 3) the seminal reason or ratio (*logos spermatikos*) of Plotinus, the analogy that the ratio of the founder is to his successors as the seed is to full grown plant. Just as the plant root and branch is in the seed, so is all the subsequent unfolding of the founding idea inherent in it. It seems to be psychologically impossible to abandon or obliterate sacred texts, for example, the *Odyssey* or the Pentateuch, without either something to replace them or some instrument to adapt them. Bacon himself illustrates the point. Although he asks “...[W]hy should a few received authors stand up like Hercules’ Columns, beyond which there should be no sailing or discovering (1605, II, 223)?” when it comes to dealing with the obstacles, he does not propose obliterating or abandoning them. In fact, he adapts them by using his *novum organon* for their re-interpreting as well as the interpretation of nature, his professed objective. The emblematic title page of the *Novum Organon* shows a ship, the seagoing instrument of geographical discovery, sailing metaphorically into the new Atlantic World. It leaves behind the Pillars of Hercules, the limits of the Mediterranean Graeco-Roman tradition. But a return voyage is always possible, in fact
inevitable. Otherwise, received authors would be exposed as either white liars or frauds, raising the possibility that their successors are such also. Given of Einstein's example, it appears that certainty is so important in human psychology that most people cannot accept such a possibility.

Pico uses all three of the instruments of the occult tradition. He has solved the mystery of the *Odyssey* (56) and he has mastered the Cabala to the point where he can convert the Jews by demonstrating to them by their own methods the Christianity of their texts (59). In between is Pico's discussion of his version of the seminal ratio. He includes it in a section on what he calls "beneficent magic," but the specific form of magic he is describing is theurgy and will be so called hereafter. Theurgy, he says, "calls forth, as it were, from their hiding places into the light the powers which the largesse of God has sown in the world." This is a key sentence because it holds the analogy of the places where the powers of God hide to seeds "that are sown in the world." That is, there are places -- or things -- which hold -- or have the power to hold, i.e. attract and mediate -- the power of God just as the seed attracts and mediates power of growth between God and the plant. Thus Pico makes it clear that it is not the Geoplatonist who works the wonders, but God who has providentially sown the seeds in nature, seeds which the magus simply cultivates. Theurgy uses the harmony of the universe which the Greeks call *sumpatheia*, the mutual affinity of things, to find the *imanges* or lures to draw down the powers which "lie hidden in the recesses of the world." The womb of nature, the storehouses and secret vaults of God are favorite analogies on which the theory of astroalchemy is erected. What Pico describes as hidden in the recesses of the world are metals which are "growing" below the ground undergoing their
transformation as do living things in the world aboveground in the womb. Although theurgy seems to be the artificer, she is not. The power is already in the place or thing. It is only realized — made effective — by the Geoplatonist. He, for example, only hastens the transmutational "growth" of metals underground. Then comes the tripartite analogy: "As the farmer weds his elms to the vine, so the magus cultivates the earth, that is, he marries the lower orders to the higher by their gifts and powers." The vine on the elm was to become one of Alciati's emblems. The structure is clear: the magus is like a farmer cultivating his vines or the priest marrying a man and woman. It is the rays of the sun or the grace of God which effects the union, not the action of the farmer or priest. This section closes by ringing in the Te Deum of St. Ambrose (d. 397): "The heavens, all of the earth, is filled with the majesty of your glory (328)." One doubts that the author of this proof text had the same thing in mind that Pico does. Nevertheless, Pico has provided an acceptable answer to the enigma of the position of the Geoplatonist in the structure of nature. He is neither her imitator, which would place him under her, nor her master, which would place him over her. He occupies a middle position, that of a minister who assists in carrying out her intentions, and, it might be added, get her to assist him in carrying out his.

Now the structure of the emblem at Dee's right hand and its origins have become evident. The inscription reads *De super caelestis roretis aquae et terra dabit fructum suum* [From above the supercelestial you will make water fall like dew and the earth will give its fruits]. This "citation" is cobbled together out of Leviticus 21:4 and Ezra 34:27. The black stone in the cartouche is his scrying stone, the "lure," the theurgical object that mediates the power of God. With it Dee could "attract" the power of God like the earth "attracts" dew.
and similarly "make the earth yield its fruit." Dee in his self portrait, but accurately enough, represents himself as mediating between Britain and Theurgy.

These elements appear in the emblematic title pages of his earlier esoteric works the Propaideumata Aphoristica and the Monas Hieroglyphica. Two things in the 1558 PA title page correspond to the genealogical emblem. There is a cartouche which is not like the other in the middle of what looks like a portico. In the cartouche is Dee's monas, the significance of which will be explained below, between the letters I.D. (John Dee). The motto of the genealogical emblem sounds biblical, but Schumacher has shown that it is cobbled together out of various scriptural bits and ends, one of the more daring examples of copious eclecticism. The motto of the PA is, in Pico's sense at least, biblical in that it is Luke 21:25 and is of a piece: Erunt signa in sole luna et stellis [there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars]. There are six dotted lines emanating from the center of the "head" of the monas. They connect calidum [hot] and humidum [moist] in the corners above with terra [earth] and aqua [water] in the corners below and with the sun and moon on the right and left sides. It is significant that these six are not connected with one another directly, but only through the monas which serves as the point of reference. On the lintel above is the admonition Qui non intelligit, aut taceat aut discat [Whoever does not understand, let him either be quiet or learn].

On the title page of the MH, for all its similarity, there are significant changes. The first, the cartouche is the cartouche of the genealogy and not of the title page. Second, the monas is still in the middle of the cartouche, but it has no lines connecting it with anything else. Third, the upper corners are now ignis [fire] under which is the sun and air under which
is the moon. From both "dew" is dripping down into some sort of receptacles over the earth and water. The motto, a genuine but irrelevant one from Genesis 27:28 runs, De rore caeli, et pinguedine terrae, det tibi deus [God give thee of the dew and of the fatness of the earth...]. Dee has changed the structure from one in which the monas is central, attracting and mediating the occult powers, into the structure of earth, air, fire, familiar from the realms of Hecate. The focus has shifted from astrology itself to astrology inferior, which was the then current name of astroalchemy.

The title page of the second edition of the PA which appeared in 1568, ten years after the first edition, is a slight variation of the colophon of the first MA edition in 1564. Gone is the portico entirely, leaving the cartouche with the monas. Standing above the cartouche is a lady who in her left hand carries a sprig of wheat and in her right hand a star, presumably Spica [Latin for point or ear of grain], the brightest star in the constellation of Virgo. Below her abdomen is a small medallion in which is written the Hebrew tetragrammaton, the four letter symbol for the ineffable name of God. The identifications to this point immediately bring to mind a manifestation of Hecate. From the medallion and Virgo flow wave-like scroll emanations which swirl down around the cartouche suggesting Geoplatonic hypostases. Under the medallion is the fleur-de-lis, traditional symbol of the trinity and at the bottom a delta, the first letter of Dee's name transliterated into Greek. The motto above is the motto of the genealogical portrait, but below has been added quater (the letter delta)naris, in ternario conquiescens [the quater(delta)nary resting in the ternary). This motto announces to the world, at least that part of it versed in occult transmission, that Dee has solved the philosophical conundrum of the universe: he has squared the circle. The world is made up

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of two sets of components, the physical four elements and the psychical represented by the circle or its three-part surrogate the trinity. To bring the two, the quaternary and the ternary into harmony, to philosophically "square the circle" was, and remained, the intellectual challenge on into the next century. Hobbes thought that his own great claim to fame was having squared the circle, although the feat by his day has lost its supercelestial implications. What's more, Dee has discovered that delta, an obvious symbol for the trinity, is the fourth letter in the Greek alphabet [alpha, beta, gamma, delta]. Dee closes the prayer which he writes at the end of the MA with "Amen. Says the fourth letter" and adds the Greek letter delta should anyone not know what letter that was. Further below, he adduces another symbol. It is a circle in which is written intellectus judicat veritatem [intellect judges truth]. Below that is written contractus ad punctum [contracted to a point] and the note, "Here the vulgar eye will see nothing but Obscurity and will despair considerably." By now the eye of the reader of the work will not be so vulgar as to "despair considerably" albeit that eye may not be quite so hope-filled as was Dee's.

Be that as it may, the discussion up till now has adduced a number of factors which speak to the objectives of this work. The first is the meaning of the symbols in the "Rainbow" portrait. The preponderance of the evidence is that the identity of the Elizabeth's persona in the portrait is Hecate, the Hecate of Hesiod and the Geoplatonists, not the Hecate of the witches sabbath. The second is the question of the specific concept of the imagination which informs the portrait and that is the Geoplatonic as formulated by Proclus. The connection between the two has been suggested by the appearance of the Hecate surrogate Virgo and the monas hieroglyphica together in the MH colophon and in the PA second edition title page.
(and colophon). That parallels the two. It remains to find the inclusive middle term, to relate Hecate to geometry by relating the monas to geometry, specifically the geometric imagination of Proclus. The final punctum [point] of the MA provides that inclusive middle term, itself. The challenge of emulating the divine creation of the Pentateuch as carried forward into Christianity is that God creates

ex nihilo. One suspects, after the foregoing investigations, that the original intent of the authors, if one may speak at the human level, was to block just such theurgic speculation as Dee indulges in by erecting a conundrum that would make it impossible, even analogically, to emulate the divine method of creation. Here geometry rescues Dee from the ex nihilo dilemma. Dee's first “theorem” in the MH is that all things can be demonstrated by the straight line and the circle to be either non-existent or “merely hidden under Nature's veils”. The first paragraph of theorem gives the jist of the matter:

Neither the circle without the line, not the line without the point [punctum] can be artificially produced. It is, therefore, by virtue of the monas [which serves as Dee's punctum] that all things begin to emerge in principle.

To summarize, there is a logical [geometrical] order in the universe. Geometry emerges from the point, location without dimension, the line, dimension and direction without area, and the circle, the most simple and therefore most perfect area. The circle is symmetrical and therefore economical, a characteristic which it shares with the rectilinear triangle [delta]. One might go on to the sphere, which is sort of a universal circle. There is no “thing” in the world that has only location or only rectilinearity, or for that matter, only area. Everything that exists has at least three dimensions. There are no non-dimensional, one
dimensional or two dimensional objects in reality. The figures of geometry are produced, as Proclus instructs, by the mind using the soul’s imagination and, since mind creates reality by the agency of the soul’s imagination, the creation of geometric figures emulates the creation of the universe. The Geoplatonist is godlike because he creates his figures ex nihilo by choosing the elements of three dimensional reality which are the inclusive middle term between no-thing and some-thing — location, dimension, area — using as his point of origin the principle of symmetry or analogy. So, where the originating principle is logic, the creative principle is analogic. Just as the Geoplatonist can reconstruct the origin of the universe descending from his point, line, circle model, he can form any geometrical figure — and everything in the world is essentially a geometric figure — reverse the process and ascend the structure of the universe like a ladder because of its analogic symmetry.

In Greek there are two words for one, mono- and heno-, to cite them in the combining forms current in English. The first means one and only as in monotheism; the second means one among many. The two conceptually mark the boundary being non-being and being in that the things that “are” are not one, they are ones. To the Geoplatonic mindset, one is the inclusive middle term between only one and one among many. Dee believed that he had discovered the ladder to connect the one and the many, that ancient conundrum, by constructing his monas ex nihilo starting with the point, extending it to a radius, the constructing the circle whose periphery is a function of that radius, etc. until he had constructed a figure which was the image of all the astronomical signs, principally Mercury (the Latin name for that old friend of the Geoplatonist, Hermes). One might add as well, although no one has mentioned it, mankind itself, the microcosmos of the macrocosmos. If
one keeps in mind that the report of the theurgic Egyptian statues that attract astral influences is found in the Latin *Asclepius*, one of the pseudographia of Hermes Trismegistus, the significance of the identification with Mercury is clear. Hermes in Homer is already a mediating figure (see p.61 above).

Dee's monas is logically, analogically, theoretically unassailable. Problems come only in application. Any effective theory must meet two criteria: internal self-consistency and external other-consistency. It must not contradict itself, equally, it must not contradict the world outside "its" self. Dee spent his life trying to make his in itself brilliant formula "work" one way or another in the world. When direct application of the monas failed to produce results, he tried to apply it indirectly. It became the scrying glass of the title pages meant to attract angels rather than astral forces. He died in 1608 still not totally convinced that the monas was in principal wrong. To do that, he would have had to recognize that the Geoplatonic orthodoxy of his day was wrong and he was too deeply embedded in his society to imagine that as even a possibility. It was only the "outsider" insider Francis Bacon who could well imagine the possibility and make it's realization his life's work.

It is time to bring together all the evidence bearing on the interpretation of the symbols of the "Rainbow" portrait. First, there are three images from publications of the late 1590's that are adduced by Strong (1987, 157-161) following Yates (1975, 215-219, 220-221). The first to be discussed is the illustration of the *Sponsa Thessalonicensis* from J.J. Boissard's 1581 *Habitus variarum orbis gentium* [dress of the various peoples of the world]. Strong's illustration is the *spasa tessalonica* from the Italian version of Cesare Vecellio's 1593 *Habiti antichie e moderni de Diversi Parti del Mondo* [ancient and modern costumes from different
parts of the world] which was a source of costumes for masques. The fact that there were two versions indicates the popularity of the work. Two other illustrations come from Cesare Ripa's 1593 *Iconologia*, an interesting title because it suggests the distinction of the imagination as *eikasia* or *phantasia*. They are in Plato's sense the "likely" or proper icons. The first is *Ragione di stato*, the second *Intelligenza*, which has already been discussed. The headdress and the suggestion of the greatcloak of the portrait's Faery Queen come from the illustration of *Sponsa Thessalonicensis*, the bride from Thessalonica. The identification of the bride as from Thessalonica, a town on the coast just north of Thessaly, rather than from Thessaly itself is a little surprising to anyone familiar with Geoplatonic geography. It will be remembered from Graves that Thessaly is the homeland of the Thessalian witches, notably Hecate. Nevertheless, if one understands *sponsa* ironically — Hecate has no groom at all — or simply as not married, the identification is persuasive. In fact, Yates has a footnote remarking that Boissard made illustrations showing the costume on Circe, the phantastic as opposed to the eikastic Hekate, who appears in both Proclus and Pico (p. 60 and p. 61 above). It is the headdress above all that is found in the "Rainbow" portrait, there surmounted by the upturned "crescent" crest of the Byzantine Hecate. The relevant details from *Ragione de stato* [raison d'état] are the eyes and ears on the greatcloak's lining which Ripa describes as *torchino* [a torch-like color]. The eyes and ears refer her advisors and informers — spies, if you will — and the flame-like color to the zeal necessary to maintain her *imperium*. Elizabeth was fond of nicknames and she called Leicester, for example, her "eyes." But as a general symbol for the long-serving gentlemen of Elizabeth's inner circle non better than eyes and ears could be found. But *Ragione di stato* possesses another image
which may be a key to dating the portrait and that is the poppy plant on her right hand side. In her right hand she holds the staff of authority and on the ground lie poppies which she has knocked off the plant with that staff. The text explains that this is a reference to Livy book I decade 1. There Livy recounts the silent answer of Tarquinus to the messenger of his son Periander who asked how to deal with some of his contentious subordinates. Tarquinus didn't say anything. He just led the messenger out into his garden, took a stick, and decapitated the highest poppies. Bacon cites a parallel episode from Herodotus [Histories Bk.5, 92] as an example of communication by gesture alone (1605, 300). In Herodotus' version, the poppies are wheat, which suggests that in itself the fact that the flowers are poppies has no significance.

This image relates to the question of the dating through two points in Shakespeare's Richard II. When Essex was fomenting his ill-fated putsch early in 1601, he had Richard II played some forty times. This number comes from a conversation that Elizabeth had with William Lambarde in the August following the February of Essex' execution. Elizabeth was reading Lambarde's new history of England aloud when she came to Richard III and said, "I am Richard II, know ye not." First comes to mind that Richard is surrounded by the likes of Bushy, Green and Bagot, those archetypical evil advisors, who are the "caterpillars of the realm" already mentioned in Chapter 1 (p.15). That is the parallel that Essex wanted to propagate, because he represented his uprising as being against her evil advisors and not against Elizabeth herself.

But second, the Tarquinus image in the AR portrait brings to mind another scene in Richard II. In the "garden" scene (3.4.25-107), Richard's Queen overhears the gardeners
analyze her husband's shortcomings. They do so in terms of their own trade, keeping order in a garden. The head gardener orders his subordinate, to “like an executioner / Cut off the heads of too fast growing sprays, / That look too lofty in our commonwealth.” Apparently Elizabethan gardeners read either Herodotus or Livy, maybe both. The undergardener objects, asking why they should keep order in their garden, when the king was not keeping order in his kingdom, which, he says, is swarming with caterpillars. The head gardener retorts that the caterpillars Bushy, Green and Talbot have already gotten their comeuppance and that the king, who is in Bolingbroke's hands, will soon get his. Gardeners high and low had best mind their business. If it is assumed that Cecil, who became Master of Ceremonies only after Essex' downfall, had in mind keeping before Elizabeth's eyes the laudable public aspect of Essex' fate as against the lamentable private aspect when he commissioned the portrait, he would be hard pressed to give a better *exemplum* than the one in either Herodotus or Livy.

The last of the iconographic emblems *Intelligenza* has already been discussed in chapter 3 (pp. 62-63). This emblem gives the key to the snake/sphere symbol on Elizabeth's left foresleeve. It is a Geoplatonic ladder symbol in which the snake itself represents both the terrestrial and, with its upward writhing body, the celestial ladder. The supercelestial is represented by the sphere which has been shown to be the contribution of Dee (p. 68 ff.) and is therefore a reference to him. The color scheme of the bands on the snake's back is the black, red, white progression which represents Hecate's realms, earth, air, fire as well as the stages of the mystico-alchemical process of purification, illumination, perfection. The ruby heart hanging out the mouth of the snake refers to Sir Thomas Gresham of Gresham's Law, the financial wizard who initially almost alone kept Elizabeth financially afloat and was her
The flowers from the garland on her head have been transferred to Elizabeth's bodice where they still represent the perfect flowering of the mind/soul. There is a last personal reference and that is the small gauntlet on Elizabeth’s right collar and that betokens Lee, her perennial champion. The last major symbol to be accounted for is the “rainbow” which she holds out in her her right hand. The motto of the portrait reads *non sine sole iris* [not without the sun the rainbow]. The serpent symbol suggests that this rainbow is the philosopher’s — alchemist’s — rainbow the color scheme of which as noted (p. 63) corresponds to that of the snake and to that of the jewels of the portrait as a whole. The sun refers to Apollo — God — whose the light of whose emanations the moon — Hecate — reflects to work her thaumaturgic and theurgic wonders. Here as elsewhere these wonders are ascribed not to the theurgist Elizabeth, but to God. At the level of personal references, “sun” was one of Lee’s important nicknames which he had not only for his martial feats, but also for his unfailing good humor (p. 71 above). Dee, Lee and Leiscester had been intimately involved in the events of the Woodstock year. Gresham had been a key financial advisor. The AR portrait proves to be a masterpiece of the emblematic imagination of Geoplatonism. Copious eclecticism had produced a synthesis of concentric symbols which, for all their heterogeneity, focus on Elizabeth as “like an alchemist divine; Gross times of yron turning Into the purest gold ...” The alchemist of divine transmutation was Hecate:

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Much suspected, by me
Nothing proved can be
Quoth Elizabeth, prisoner.
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Chapter 5: Images of Bacon

This work has a main title — *The Alchemists' Rainbow Portrait* — and a subtitle — *Emblem, Imagination and The Arthurian Gentleman under Elizabeth I*. The first four chapters have focused on the “Rainbow” portrait’s presentation of Elizabeth as Hecate the alchemist monarch. The last chapters focus on the Arthurian gentlemen John Dee and Francis Bacon and examine works of theirs which exemplify the influence of the Geoplatonic imagination in the emblem under Elizabeth and after. The emblem, like the AR portrait, becomes a talisman, an object which attracts and converts occult forces into personally and socially useful forms. Early conceptual models — the seed, which converts the rays of the sun into plants, or the optical mirror, which converts them into fire — shift to technological ones like the ship.

By and large the only emblem of Bacon that is recognized as such is the title page of *The Great Instauration*¹ [the great renewal], hereafter GI. The title is often misleadingly shortened to the *Novum Organum* [the new instrument] because that, the second of its six parts, is thought to be the most important. There is an anachronistic justice in the usage because it brings to the foreground that Bacon stands in a line of development of which in England has as landmarks Erasmus’s 1517 *Novum Instrumentum* and the 1570 *Mathematical Preface* in which Dee proposes *archimaistrie*, his new astroalchemy. It seems that every ambitious young man worth his quill who didn’t have a national epic in mind was cobbling together a new instrument or the instrument’s *alter ego*, a new method. Although the NO title page is not Bacon’s only emblem, it is important because it focuses on the burning
question of the day: technology, the thaumaturgy/theurgy of Dee and the Geoplatonists. A comparison and contrast of it with the title page of Dee's 1577 General and Rare Memorials Pertaining to the Perfect Art of Navigation (hereafter GaRM) makes vividly graphic the epochal differences between the works. Both works deal emblematically with the blue water or seagoing ship, an exemplary instrument of the technology of the day. Bacon oddly omits it from his list of world-changing inventions: the printing press, the compass, the gun and its powder (NO I, 129), but this nautical instrument dominates his emblematic imagination.

If one looks first at the GaRM emblem, then at the NO emblem, the first thing that strikes the eye is that the copious eclecticism of the first has vanished from the second. Bacon has, so to speak, cleared the air. The emblematic elements are held to a minimum uncharacteristic of Bacon. There are only those necessary to the point. One misses the usual cramming in of all available space with parallel and complementary evocations. The page looks almost empty to the eye used to the products of copious eclecticism. There are the two Pillars of Hercules flanked by a few inconspicuous flowers. A large bluewater ship, like the Novum Organon itself an the instrument of discovery, sails out into the Atlantic with its gun ports open, guns run out, ready for the vicissitudes of exploration. It is preceded by an inconspicuous but playful dolphin. Two other even more inconspicuous dolphins gambol in the waves to the starboard and port. A second, small ship is in perspective in the background. Between the Pillars, the name of the author, his rank, Lord Chancellor of England, and the title appear in letters more calculated to blend into the overall design than to stand out. There is one and only one biblical quotation (Daniel 17:20): Multi pertransibunt e augebitur


scientia [Many will go to and fro and knowledge will be increased]. This lends the matter apocalyptic approval. Bacon explains (NO I, 93):

Nor should the prophecy of Daniel (17:20) be forgotten, touching the last ages of the world...clearly intimating that the thorough passage of the world (which now by so many distant voyages seems to be accomplished, or in the course of accomplishment), and the advancement of the sciences, are destined by fate, that is, Divine providence, to meet in the same age.

Whether Bacon anticipates the end of the world when his voyages have gone to and fro or just the closed cycle of the European period or revolution is murky. Bacon is open minded and more than willing to take his help where he finds it. This is as copious eclecticism dictates. The single source of light coming from the upper left lends — and would do so even more if there were color — a Baroque air of dynamic perspective and rhythmic subordination. If his writing had shown similar conceptual discipline, it is probable that Bacon, who seems never to have met a metaphor that he didn't like, would have been even more influential than he in fact was. But the elaborations of Geoplatonism are not to be so lightly dismissed.

Just how elaborate those elaborations could be is demonstrated by Dee's title page. It is divided into two parts, the upper medallion which bears the title and a lower box which bears the inscription brytanikon hieroglyphikon around its border. The medallion too has a border which provides the key to the cipher Plura latent quam patent [there is more latent — occult — than patent — manifest]. There is one thing, however, that is manifest and that is the parallelism between monas hieroglyphika and britanikon hieroglyphikon. Dee provides Britannia with the talisman which will attract supercelestial forces to her defense. The foremost subject of the work being coastal defense, the instrument of the talisman is, as in
Bacon, the deepwater ship which here appears just off center right. This is not Bacon's ship of exploration, but the ship of state, the ship at the origin of the metaphor government [Greek kubernetes, helmsman]. Elizabeth is literally at the helm of her ship of state: she sits regally on the poop deck and stretches out her right hand while four of her gentlemen below on the midship deck look on. For identification, the ship of state has the royal crest on the rudder, as well as Europa written across the port side of the ship. As if to reinforce the point with a personal appearance, Europa is seen riding her bull in the waves. Atop the ship's two masts are the combined chi rho [ch-r-istos] over the upturned half-moon of Hecate, the symbol of Byzantium. The sails of Dee's ship billow — as do those of Bacon's — as she sails out to meet a line of the ships of hostile invaders who, having thought ahead, have provided themselves with guns which they have already run out. The HMS Europe, which has no guns, must be relying on a Godspeed for succor, perhaps the theurgy of the divine presence indicated in the upper right hand corner by the tetragrammaton whose afflatus fills the sails and drives HMS Europe onward. Bacon's good ship Novum Organum operates within a more conventional meteorology.

In the sky, one of Dionysius' angels, the Archangel Michael, is leading the ship with sword drawn and shield forward. The sun and moon, new through full, smile on benignly in the presence of a constellation of stars which form something like the Pythagorean tetractys. On a promontory between the closing ships is a miniature Byzantium or Constantinople as it was better known in 1453 when the Turks took it. Over and behind it stands Alciati's Occasion whose hair forms a lock blown forward to which she points with her left hand, but is shaved behind. This is to show that one must take Occasion by the forelock when she
comes because it is too late afterwards. Fortune stands on a pyramid which balances on a ball to show her instability, but in her right hand she holds a laurel wreath toward Elizabeth who, as noted earlier, has her right stretched out. Along the left side of the promontory is a waterway — the Bosporus — which separates it from the mainland on which advance hostile soldiers with torches and drawn swords. The people of the promontory appear to be asleep or otherwise occupied. Only two are seen accepting bags of gold from hostiles who already have crossed and are corrupting the natives to induce them to betray the city. There are besides these scenes a stalk of wheat, the plant of Virgo, overturned and a skull, neither of which bodes well. Britannica herself appears on the coast, on her knees petitioning Elizabeth to do something about the non-existent coastal installations and patrol ships. Britannica has two suggestions written on two scroll-like banners. One, which she has left under the walls of Byzantium, reads to phróirion te s asphaléias [watchtower of security] and the other in her hand fluttering to the right, reads stólos eksóplísmenos [an armed fleet]. Apparently Britannica has noticed that there are no weapons on the HMS Europa. Britannica is making her appeal to the Geoplatonic protectress of Byzantium. The parallel between the predicament of England in the 1570's and that of Byzantium in the 1450's was clear to anyone with eyes. The plight of the Byzantine scholars who had come to Italy after the fall as refugees was well known. These are the people responsible for the resurgence of the study of Hellenic and Hellenistic thought and they may be one source of the literary popularity of Hecate.

The contrast between the NO title page and the GaRM title page suggests that Bacon had left the images of Geoplatonism far behind. But a deeper familiarity with his work and a comparison with that of Pico leads to the conviction that a number of Bacon's key concepts...
are present seminally in Pico. This does not mean that one or more of them is not found in other writers, but not all of them together. As a whole they constitute a syndrome, here a system of ever more specific concepts that characterize an -ism, in this case Geoplatonism.

In short, to whatever end Bacon himself or others may have taken his thought, the beginning and the middle are demonstrably Geoplatonic. The seven characteristic topics are from general to specific: 1) independence from the past, 2) the few thinkers who block the way), 3) the writer's new philosophy or method, 4) the interpretation of nature, 5) the ladder \( \text{scala} \) of nature, 6) philosophy as \textit{cultura animi}, 7) the personae of the philosopher: farmer, servant, minister, priest of nature, but not imitator or master. Two of Bacon's topics, however, are not characteristic of Geoplatonism and they are: 1) his very vocal anti-Aristotelianism and 2) putting nature "on the rack." They are discussed first, beginning with Aristotle or, better, Aristotelianism. There is only one important contradiction between Aristotelianism and all the forms of Platonism, the one summed up in the medieval maxim \textit{Nihil est in intellectu, quod non prius fuerit in sensu} [Nothing is in the mind which was not first in the senses].

This posits the mind as a \textit{tabula rasa}, a blank tablet with no structure of its own. Whether this is taken as a methodological recommendation, or more seriously as a metaphysical axiom, it contradicts the main tenet of any Platonism, especially Geoplatonism. Proclus responds to this assertion (CoFBE 14):

\textit{The soul therefore was never a writing tablet bare of inscriptions \textit{[tabula rasa]}; she is a tablet which has always been inscribed and is always writing itself \textit{[on the imagination]} and always being written on \textit{[the imagination]} by mind...If mind is exemplar, soul is copy; if mind is everything in concentration, soul is everything discursively.}

This is well the most succinct statement of the role of the imagination in Geoplatonism and
it is delivered specifically in contradiction to the Aristotelian *tabula rasa*. The Geoplatonists handled the discord between Plato and Aristotle gracefully by overlooking it and declaring a harmony. In fact, there is, other than the *tabula rasa* axiom, a wide-reaching harmony between the two, so the Geoplatonists emphasized the status of Aristotle as Plato's student and confined themselves to the many points where they concur. Pico points out that Boethius among others promises but fails to produce a harmony of the two but declares that he himself has done so. Dee in the beginning of the MP represents their differences as being a matter of approach rather than of substance. Bacon, perhaps because of his position and the influence of the universities, was much more concerned with academics than was either Pico or Dee. He attacks the sterile logic chopping, the logicism of scholastic pedants without defending the analogicism of the Geoplatonists, which he stigmatizes as “the anticipation of nature,” a reluctance to discipline oneself to elucidating the everyday processes of nature in favor of leaping over them to “higher” truths. This was as deadly, to his mind, as the eternal *Distinguuo! of the schoolmen, the endless distinctions with little concern for their consistency with the very processes of nature that the Geoplatonists wanted to bolt over. In Bacon's eyes the schoolmen and the Geoplatonists were equally blameworthy, though in different ways, of ignoring the quotidian reality in the perusal of which he himself expected however fuzzily to come cross the key to nature.

A second even more non-Geoplatonic characteristic is Bacon's insistence on putting “nature on the rack.” The reference is to judicial torture which was still permitted in Bacon's day in cases involving the security of the monarch. The image of the philosopher as torturer of nature does not fit well in the usual list of Pico's metaphors for the relationship of the
philosopher and nature: as the farmer, the alchemist, the servant, the minister, the priest. It doesn't fit in well even with the negative list: he is neither the imitator nor the master of nature. The torturer metaphor suggests that the fascination of the *Timaeus* belief that the world, nature, is a holy being has lost its hold on Bacon. The experience of the divine becomes the experiment on the divine. Divinity itself is to be the first victim of the vivisection. The activism of the astro-alchemist gain the upper hand over the contemplation of the servant, the minister and the priest.

Be that as it may, is a strange servant or minister — much less priest — that tortures his king. Yet this inquisitorial image brings to mind Bacon's title *Filum Labyrinthis sive Formula Inquisitionis ad Filios* [the clue [thread] to the Maze or the formula of inquisition to his sons (1607)], hereafter CttM, a short work in which Bacon for once exhibits self-control over his passion for metaphors, exempla and meandering. For once, he allots himself a small sheaf of paper and pot of ink and trims his argument to fit in them. His presentations normally are like the seagoing explorations of good ship Novum Organum. The ship holds a steady heading and even makes progress toward its announced destination. But it rises and falls with every swell, drifts off course in every current, tacks for every wind and is from time to time becalmed. Though admiring the helmsman's feats of seamanship, the landlubber arrives worn, queasy and not quite steady on his legs. He knows that he has been taken somewhere, but is not quite sure where.

Bacon thinks of the CttM as a testament to his intellectual progeny (he had no other). He writes of himself in the third person and numbers the paragraphs like the sections of a will. It is a concise statement of his project and the last words of the title have a direct bearing:
"the formula of inquisition." The image of stretching the accused on the rack would not fail to evoke the method of royal inquisition into treason. Bacon's torturer stands attentively next to the straining rack with the list of his well thought out questions to put to agonizing nature. But the use of the rack was a royal prerogative and the question arises on whose behalf this instrument was to be used. Keeping in mind that the philosopher is the supposed servant and minister of the king, just who is the king?

In the first book of the PaAoL Bacon is out to flatter James I into funding there search and development of the "clue to the labyrinth." In this place Bacon begins by comparing James to Hermes Trismegistis, and, in the spirit of copious eclecticism, arrives a few pages on at Solomon. His proof place is Proverbs 25:2, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to find it out (398)." This translation does not quite square with the Vulgate which has verbum and sermonem where Bacon has thing and it respectively. For Bacon, nevertheless, this was an obvious divine injunction to James to put the resources of the kingdom behind his efforts. James thought otherwise. That was in 1605, but by 1607 Bacon had thought better of his solution to the glory conundrum, "[I]t is the glory of God to conceal, but it is the glory of man (or of the king, for the king is but the excellency of man) to invent." This shift from the concrete Stuart to an abstract man as the reference point of philosophy reflects a darkly modern tendency in Bacon. It points forward to a future of Hobbes' Leviathan and its progeny who do whatever they will ostensibly in the interest of a faceless and voteless "humanity." Bacon has surreptitiously deposed the Stuarts, the divine representatives and, wittingly or not, the divine itself along with them. "Humanity" or, rather, its well intentioned but merciless improver stands ready to mount the throne. As the saying
has it, The king is dead, long live the king! The following section shows how Bacon combined the elements of the Geoplatonic syndrome. The previous discussion of the NO title page has covered their independence from the past and the few previous thinkers who block the way, points 1 and 2. On the basis of Bacon's Gorhambery emblems, it will continue here with points 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7: Bacon's new philosophical method, the interpretation of nature, the ladder of nature, philosophy as cultura animi, and the philosopher as the servant or minister of nature, the farmer or priest, but in reverse order.

The discussion will start with the last point Bacon had a number of emblems painted on the various walls of his family home at Gorhambery which he inherited when his brother died in 1601. In his Brief Lives (14-15) Aubrey gives notes on only four of them although there were many more. One must be grateful to him for noting any emblems at all -- he was the only one to do so for all of England -- and, beyond that, for having selected very important ones. The Gorhambery emblems fall into two groups: three in the original building and one on the new “noble Portico” that Bacon had built specifically as an emblem gallery after acquiring the house. The first in the present context was on the wall over the [dinner] table in the “large well-built Gothique howse.” It showed “Ceres teaching the Soweing of Corne [wheat] and the Word, Moniti meliora.” Loosely translated this comes out to be the now familiar sentiment, We have a better idea. Of the various personae of the Geoplatonist listed under characteristic 7, this emblem is corresponds to the farmer; Ceres is the goddess of agriculture identified with the Hellenic Demeter. The motto is from the Aeneid (III.188) in which the Trojans led by Aeneas in search of a new homeland have settled in Crete. Things
go badly and plague infests humans and crops. Aeneas is about to leave Crete to visit an oracle of Apollo for instructions, when the night before, the Phrygian Penates whom he has saved from the flames of Troy and brought along with him appear to him in a dream and tell him on the behalf of Apollo to sail westward to Hesperia, a land blessed with rich soil. The significance of the instructions to sail westward to Bacon are obvious in the context of the NO title page emblem, but also in the mytho-history of Britain. Aeneas and the Trojans sailed westward to Italy and his grandson Brutus, the eponymous hero of Britain, later again sailed westward to the land that bears his name. Bacon is convinced that the future of Britain lies in metaphorically sailing westward. The reference in the description of Hesperia to the rich soil explains the presence of Ceres and her interest in agricultural improvement. Bacon, like Chaucer and Erasmus, expresses reservations if not outright hostility to the military aspects of the Arthurian gentleman. It has already been mentioned that Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Topaz*, Spenser's inspiration for the relationship of the Faery Queen and Prince Arthur, is a parody of the very sort of chivalric poem which Spenser wrote. Erasmus shared Bacon's aversion both to scholastic logicism and brawny, brawling Tudor Arthurian gentleman/knights. In *De pueris instituendis* (1506) which he wrote in Italy where he was the tutor to the children of the future doctor to Henry VIII he objects that the "stupid and tyrannical fables of King Arthur" are being taught rather than the classics both profane and sacred of the humanists. Bacon himself in paragraph 9 of the CttM points out that the failures of the Geoplatonic trio of alchemy, astrology and theurgy — one of his favorite subjects — should no more discredit his efforts at the instauration of works than the deeds of Alexander should be discredited "because the like or more strange [deeds] have been feigned of an Amadis or an Arthur or
other fabulous worthies." Here Bacon aims not only at Arthur, his favorite chivalric bugaboo; he also takes a swipe at the favorite of Cervantes in *Don Quijote* (1605, 1615), Amadis of Gaul. It is well to remember that an awareness that the idea of chivalry had reached its limits was not confined to Bacon.

In the *Aeneid* Virgil glorifies the benefits of sailing and fighting, but he knows that they have limitations as his pairing of rich soil and weapons in the Penates' prophecy on Apollo's behalf shows. He had written an earlier work, the *Georgics* [farmership], to laud the benefits of agriculture on rich soil and recommends it highly to Augustus. Bacon evokes the authority of Virgil when he conflates *georgics* with *cultura ani-mi*, [agri-]culture of the soul, Cicero's translation of *philosophy* into the Roman mindset. The Roman had trouble understanding why he should love the wisdom [philosophia] of the Greeks, but when it came to his fields, he needed no lessons. Bacon explains (1605, 318):

[Virgil] got as much eloquence, wit, and learning in the expressing of the observations of husbandry, as of the heroical acts of Aeneas....And surely if he purpose be...really to instruct and suborn [induce] action and the active life, these Georgics of the mind, concerning the husbandry and tillage hereof, are no less worthy than the historical descriptions of virtue.

One senses that Bacon's husbandry is more Pico's theurgy which unites heaven to earth by wedding elms to vines than the husbandry which does so by planting more "corne" [wheat] in the north forty. Nevertheless, the strength of the English tradition of the gentleman farmer which goes back to the Virgilian model ought not to be underestimated. Dee's "certain especially important virtues of nature" found in the title of the PA, can certainly be described as elegantly in agricultural terms as the virtues of Aeneas can be in military terms. But Bacon's suggestion that there need be no choice between the sword and the
plough does not identity the elusive alter or anti-hero who is to unseat Arthur and Amadis. The question of that identity is taken up again in another emblem painted on a large emblem wall in the hall. It shows what Aubrey identifies as a feast of the gods at which Vulcan has Mars trapped in a net. This is not a feast of the gods at all; it is a rendition of the incident in Homer (Odyssey viii, 266-367) in which Hephaestos [Vulcan] discovers that his wife Aphrodite is having an affair with the vain, loud-mouthed Ares [Mars]. Vulcan arranges a net over their trysting bed and when they are in congress drops it snugly over them so that they cannot separate. He then invites the other gods to inspect the mighty warrior with his dander up. The other gods are in stitches; one might easily mistake the scene for a banquet. Vulcan to Bacon is the symbol of the metallurgist-thaumaturgist about whom Bacon quotes the alchemists, “Vulcan is a second nature, and imitateth that dexterously and compendiously which nature worketh by ambages [roundabouts] and length of time (1607, 252).” Of course, Bacon is not interested in metalurgy or any technology for its own sake.

A third emblem is mentioned before the last for the sake of completeness. It shows an oak tree with acorns falling from it with the motto Nisi quid potius [if you can’t do anything else]. The word is evidently an adaption of the adage that mighty oaks from small acorns do grow. The import is that Bacon ought not to be concerned that his reforms are not taken up immediately. If he emulates the oak tree and drops his acorns, things in time will take care of themselves.

The final emblem is the only one Aubrey remembers of those on the noble portico. Since they had been done in water colors, many of them were in poor or worse condition, but one showing a ship in a storm with the motto Altererit tum Tiphys [there will be another
Tiphys] fortunately was still visible, fortunately because it holds the key to the identity of the farmer-servant-minister-craftsman who now acquires yet another and by now familiar persona, the helmsman. As Apollonius of Rhodes has it, Tiphys was the first helmsman of Jason's Argonauts. Bacon discusses him at length in his essay *Of Prophecies*. He starts by making it clear that he is not talking about divine prophesies -- oracles -- or even predictions based on probabilities. He intends prophecies that have been "of certain memory and from hidden causes." He gives no further explanation of just what those hidden causes might be, but he does give the example of Homer's putative prediction in Virgil (*Aeneid, III.97-8* based on *Iliad* XX.307-8) that the house of Aeneas will rule over nations, including Britain and, presumably, through it the Americas. He gives a further example in which Seneca has Medea say (*Medea, 375-8*), "There shall come a time when the Ocean will loosen the bonds of things and Tiphys shall disclose new worlds." The inference is that Bacon sees himself as this new Tiphys who at the helm of the good ship Novum Organum is going to open new worlds just as Brutus and Columbus had. Bacon takes up the matter of Medea's prophecy again at the end of the essay. He characterizes it as one of the "probable conjectures or obscure traditions [that] many times turn themselves into prophecies." He notes that people long ago had concluded that the earth is a globe and it was unlikely that all the unknown area could be water. If they made such a deduction and added to it the *Timaeus* and the "*Atlantis*" -- the then name for the *Critias* -- they might just have come up with a prediction. If they didn't, he did. It is called *The New Atlantis* (1624, publ. 1627).

The two characteristic themes of Geoplatonism that have not yet been discussed are the interpretation of nature and the ladder of nature. The first is of course the alternate title
of the NO: *The New Organum or Directions concerning the Interpretation of Nature*; the second is the fourth section of the GI, the only section of which nothing was written. One immediately thinks that Bacon's title connotes a rejection of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneutike*, a book of the *Organon*, known at least since Boethius as *De Interpretatione*. This is, also, the connotation of Erasmus' title *Novum Instrumentum*. However, NO I, 39 puts the matter in another light:

> The conclusions of human reason as ordinarily applied in the matter of nature, I call for the sake of distinction *Anticipations of Nature* (as a thing rash or premature). That reason [*ratio*] which is elicited from fact by a just and methodical process, I call *Interpretation of Nature*.

It would appear from this passage that Bacon's use of *interpretation* is a compliment to Aristotle of whose work Bacon is saying that, if it is not the last word on method, it is certainly the first and most lasting. Bacon wants to apply the same meticulousness to nature that Aristotle applies to the declarative sentence. However, Aristotle balks at going beyond the literal meaning to a figurative meaning, the practical import of the *nihil* axiom. Although the method of both the Aristotelian and the Geoplatonist centers on the inclusive or distributive middle term, the Geoplatonist always prefers analogic to logic. Bacon's dilemma is how to reconcile the two tendencies. The solution is the ladder of nature which combines the best aspects of both. Bacon gives a clear formulation of this solution (1605, 253):

> Natural philosophy has a double scale or ladder, ascendent and descendent; ascending from experiments to the invention of causes, and descending from causes to the invention of new experiments.

Gone are Pico's angels and Dee's hope of an assumption by means of the scrying glass. What remains is Proclus' ruthlessly logical structure combined with Dionysius' overlapping hierarchy
in which each level communicates only with the next through an inclusive middle as follows: a talks to b and b talks to c and c talks to d, etc. It is impossible or self-defeating for a to talk to d. Even the angels have to go through the chain of command. In Bacon's terminology, this would be anticipation of the nature of things, the nature of things being the ladder structure. The analogical ladder as interpreted by Bacon has two elements: the side pieces which are the hierarchy of causes and the rungs which are the experiments by which one after another the Baconian mind relentlessly ascends and descends the hierarchy of causes. This analysis shows just how deeply Bacon's thought was rooted in Geoplatonism. Bacon has beaten Dee at his game but only after Dee had laid out a field and written the rules. Of the subjects of the subtitle only the role of imagination is left to discuss and that is left to Chapter 6 (p. 111 ff).

It has been shown that with Bacon career opportunities for the Arthurian gentleman expanded greatly. In Spenser he was limited to fighting the good fight and in Dee he was limited to the role of technological advisor. In Bacon he has become next in line to the throne. The good ship Novum Organum will become the ship of state and he who knows how to ascend and descend the ladder of the intellect properly — perhaps by making it part of the rigging — will be her helmsman. The Arthurian gentleman has gone so far that he feels that he can reject Arthur and emerges as the sovereign gentleman. But that is for the future.

As an Arthurian gentleman, Bacon performs one last service for Elizabeth in 1608. He writes a biographical sketch In Happy Memory of Elizabeth Queen of England or, A Collection of the Felicities of Queen Elizabeth (hereafter CotF). Bacon begins by asserting that Elizabeth is no subject for a mere scholar who will understand nothing of her accomplishments. Rather it is for someone "belonging to statesmen and to such as sit at the
helms of great kingdoms" to write about her for only they have the experience with the weight and secrets of civil [royal] business to be able to judge with any competence. It so happens that Bacon meets both the qualifications for, if the tenure of his father is included, his experience of Elizabeth spans her entire rule and more. Bacon had been born in the third year of her reign and had been a child prodigy at her court. His father had been Lord Keeper for twenty years and his uncle Cecil Private Secretary of State for over forty years, having served her before when she was a princess. If anyone met Bacon's qualifications, he himself did. His writings examined up to now show no reluctance on his part to put his hand to the helm. The CotF bears the same relationship to Spenser's Faery Queen that the NO title page shows to Dee's GaRM title page. Gone is anything that resembles Spenser's dark conceit and in its place is the discussion of a young woman's life that is an exemplar of felicity, a confluence of luck, skill and happiness.

Bacon first makes a point that escapes later historians who tend to attribute whatever they see as her shortcomings to the fact that Elizabeth had no formal preparation to be queen. This opinion roots in the academic belief that the only place to learn anything important is in the academy, so there must have been a school somewhere that offered a MRA — master of regal administration — a degree that all canonical monarchs held. There was no such school, but even the ability of voters in the more enlightened democracies to be stone blind to the virtue of academics when selecting leaders has made no headway against the belief. Bacon points out that, if one judges by the career of her grandfather, the very successful Henry VII, it was much better to have to confront a combination of ill and good fortune on the way to the throne. The ups and downs of the path that Elizabeth traveled included the execution of
her mother and consequent alienation from her father, the formal royal and parliamentary stigmatization of bastardy, the death of that father when she was twelve, the favor and death of her brother, his death and her prosecution by her half-sister and her subsequent house arrest at Woodstock when she passed her twenty-first birthday. Released from Woodstock, she retired to Hatfield for the next three years. She ran it as a working farm that paid its own way. She was in the habit of saying later that she was the only one at court who could make her own way should need be. Finally, when she did come to the throne at twenty-five she was received with universal acclaim by all the factions who each thought they could bend her to their ways. They left out of their calculations that she had been observing them for twenty-five years and had no illusions either about them or about her own fate should she let one of the other of them gain the upper hand. After all, she had the examples of Lady Jane Grey and Mary Tudor before her eyes and, if more were needed, Mary Stuart. One feels that Bacon would agree that the Woodstock year would stand out as a landfall in the course of her life.

A second relevant point that Bacon makes is that Elizabeth, a woman, kept the English, an contentious and belligerent folk, not only in check but, the Northern Rebellion in her eleven year excepted, in domestic peace. On the other hand, internationally she maintained the honor of English arms. That she was able to have such "humble obedience" yielded to her is a "thing deserving the highest admiration (396)." This, of course, is the subject of the present work. Bacon notes, "[It is] the peculiar glory of this princess, that she had no props or supports of her government, but those that were of her own making (397)." He is referring to the absence of male relatives — he excludes Dee and Lee from consideration
-- but even more important was her choice of advisors, this time including Dee and Lee as well as the elder Bacon and the Cecils. He characterizes her relation with her gentlemen thus, "[S]he carried such a discretion in her hand over them, and so interchanged her favors as they still strive in emulation and desire to please her best, and she herself remained in all things an absolute princess(397)." In other words, she so arranged things that they were dependent on her and not she on them. She always conferred with them one by one so that they could not unite against any policy of hers. She divided her favors equally among the main factions and so maintained an equilibrium of "emulation" which directed a lot of the heat of the contest toward the opponents rather than against Elizabeth. He emphasizes the sparing use she made of her prerogative, realizing that power is most effective when one doesn't have to use it. A last point in this context is the observation that she was felicitous not only in her own person, but "in the abilities and virtues of her servants and ministers, for she was served by such persons as I suppose this island never brought forth the like before her times (398)." The Ciceronian ability to command loyalty along with Elizabeth's outward gifts of nature -- a tall stature; a comely and straight making, an extraordinary majesty of aspect, joined with a sweetness -- bring to mind the Faery Queen of the "Rainbow" portrait. Bacon took all this as a sign of divine approbation. Nevertheless, one can never forget that she selected, promoted and preserved those servants and ministers, some for more than forty years. Bacon makes clear that in his opinion she was not vain about her age or appearance beyond the ordinary or even the necessary given that both were matters of public policy. Her remark in the context of her refusal to declare a successor that she could never endure to see her winding sheet before her eyes (398) certainly had more to do with a Fabian strategy than with
vanity. Often she did nothing about problems because there was nothing to be done about them. Any initiative would simply rearrange the factors into a new form of the old problem which was just as irksome as the old, hardly an improvement from her standpoint. For example, it would have been foolhardy to give someone a reason to assassinate her. There were enough trying even without one. The existence of a legitimate successor — as Elizabeth knew from her own life — would only provide a focus for the machinations of whatever malcontents were around. The attitudes and inactivity of Elizabeth which are cited as resulting from Elizabeth's vanity can often be equally well explained as prudent cunctation.
Chapter 6: Afterimages

Bacon ends his account of the felicities of Queen Elizabeth with the discussion of the vanity question, one familiar to anyone read in the biography of Elizabeth. There are those, he writes, who rebuke her not only for letting — or having — herself be “courted, wooed, and to have sonnets [and portraits] made to her commendation,” but also allege “that she continued to do this longer than was decent for her years.” Given that these reservations are pretty well the subject matter of this work, his reply is interesting in the present context. Bacon makes himself her advocate and presents his defense of her in two forms, the best case and the worst case. His worst case argument is that all the to-do did not obstruct or even interfere with the dispatch of official business nor did it “much eclipse her fame, and not at all her majesty.” This analysis shows up a blind spot in of Bacon's mind's eye for the wider administrative function of all the sonnet writing, persona creation, Woodstock entertainments, tilts, portrait painting, etc. It is odd that someone who was not only by nature and nurture a courtier and who had himself participated in the production of its ceremonial literature — he had been a sort of ghost writer for Essex for years — would not realize that all the goings on were official business. If one recalls Cicero's characterization of the peculiar function of virtue in De Officiis — to win the hearts of men and attach them to one's service — Elizabeth by that standard excelled anyone who comes to mind in virtue. If one takes Bacon's majesty as the equivalent of Spenser's magnificence, the matter is clear. But Bacon's best case argument is even more interesting in that it bears on the question of the function of imagination in that court. Elizabeth, he writes, is like the queen in the Fortunate Islands who allowed “fair purpose and love making in her court” but banished “lasciviousness.” This is
Bacon’s version of the royal alchemist who transmutes the brassy people and brazen politics of the Tudor state. She is a philosopher queen in the image of Plato’s philosopher king of the *Laws* who would have his people, should he ever come to a throne, play beautiful games. The question whether this parallel in Bacon is a coincidence or tradition is a conundrum. The best that can be done is to appeal to the judicial standard of the preponderance of evidence -- the proper one for civil cases -- and renounce the hope of meeting the standard for capital cases, beyond a reasonable doubt.

Yates has attracted attention to the peculiarities of the British Renaissance and one the most peculiar is the explicit presence of distinction in imagination between *eikasia* and *phantasia* and its persistence afterward in other such pairs. Sidney writes, “...I will not deny but that man’s wit may make poesy (which should be *eikastike* which some learned have defined, figuring forth good things) to be *phantasitké*, which does contrariwise infect the fancy with unworthy objects.” The word *eikasia* shares a root with *eikon* (English *icon*) which meant in Proclus an image that is 1) mathematically exact in that it conforms to the laws of perspective and 2) proper in that it has as little to do with the senses as possible. In Sidney, there is a formal and explicit distinction between an aspect of the imagination which “figures forth good things,” and one which infects the imagination with “unworthy objects.” In terms of images that have recurred in this presentation, it is the difference between Hecate, who leads upward, and Calypso, who has already made her appearance in both Proclus and Pico (pp. 60-61 above) as the seductress of the mind/soul. Sidney succinctly expresses this dichotomy with an implied opposition between wit and fancy, a pair which was to have a long history. His specific example is the painter whose work is technically correct --
perspective was a part of mathematics — but also philosophically correct with a "notable example" such as Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac or David fighting with Goliath as his subject. Failing this, the painter sinks into the senses and produces "wanton shows of better hidden matters."

The notion which is behind the distinction between the mathematical Hecate image — the one that is non-sensual and therefore intellectually as well as morally "pure" — as against the Calypso image which — as did Calypso to Odysseus — keeps the mind/soul enthralled in matter is also found in the sphere of knowledge. The eikastic sciences are thaumaturgy and theurgy which are paralleled by the phantastic "sciences" dissemblance and blasphemy. No Geoplatonist would become involved in the phantastic sciences and Dee's writings often become an exercise in apologetics for his own activities and a polemic against those who accuse him of just such an involvement. Such an apology along with other personal notes is prominent in the Mathematical Preface. But even more interesting is his treatment of the two mathematical sciences, thaumaturgy and theurgy in that work. Thaumaturgy is treated explicitly in a section of that name. Dee's motto of the Brytanicon Hierogliphicon, There is more latent than patent, is especially true of the MP which in effect is Dee's theurgic manifesto. Theurgy is its occult topic.

The great dilemma that the Geoplatonist faces is the question of finding a way to write a manifesto for an occult science. This problem became acute in the age of the printing press. As long as the secret tradition was passed on orally from master to pupil or was in the form of manuscripts — hand copied — there was an inherent limitation to the risk that the information would stray from the "apostolic" line of adepts and their pupils and fall into
profane hands with god only knows what catastrophic results. With the invention and diffusion of the printing press the problem became critical, because there was no way to control the distribution of its products. Anybody with the purchase price of a given volume could buy it, carry it home and undertake whatever the reading of it brought to mind. The even greater danger was that enough readers would bring the subject into public discussion that open debate would end by discrediting the subject entirely. But that was for the future.

Dee confronts this challenge artfully. The text begins with an implied harmonizing of Plato and Aristotle, the old giveaway that marks the Geoplatonist -- the adept of *unum*, *bonum* and *ens* [the one, the good, and being] -- in the text. Plato, Dee explains, just started out talking and left his students to draw their own conclusions. They did so and often drew the conclusion that Plato's instruction was worthless to them. They saw no worldly use for it, financial or other. Aristotle, in Dee's account, employed just the opposite strategy. He told everybody at the beginning what he was going to talk about and what the advantage was to his listeners. They could leave right then if they felt his instruction was of no use. The difference between Plato and Aristotle is therefore one of strategy, not one of substance. It should be noted that this distinction between strategy and substance is not absolute. A difference in teaching strategies does not exclude differences in substance as well. Be that as it may, Dee in the MP is going to emulate Aristotle and make clear the lower advantages of mathematics in the hope that understanding them will lead the reader to the understanding of the higher advantages. Those stalwart bees who in English philosophy are ever ready to swarm for a metaphor then make an appearance: the reader by studying the practical applications of mathematics and [intuiting] the theoretical advantages will, like those
exemplary bees, gather “both wax and honey.” Lest the perceptive reader doubt the latent meaning of Dee’s excursus into comparative teaching strategies, the rubric of first page and the numbering system of the pages of the text dispel such reservations. The rubric is, an enormous $D$, the initial of the word divine (Dee-vine?), the initial of everything. On a more earthly note, the red dragon of Cadwallader, Dee’s patent of Arthurian gentlemanship, rares up in the middle of the $D$. Above it there is a symbol which returns to the divine: the triangle which is the rectilinear equivalent of the supercelestial circle and the symbol of the trinity. It is also the first letter of Dee’s name transliterated into the Greek alphabet and the fourth letter of that alphabet.

The last two facts become significant in the numbering or identification of the pages. The first page bears no number at all, only the first word of the next page, which was the printer’s way of keeping track of the order of the pages. After the first page, the following pages are identified by two’s, the only “number” being on the lower right corner of the right hand page. These numbers begin with Roman $i$ and run through $iii$. After that the next series is $a$ through $a$ $iii$ after that a $b$ series of four and a $c$ and $d$ series. In short, the MP itself is an exemplar of Geoplatonic creation ex nihilo. It starts from nothing and by dyads — groups of two pages — generates the sequence of (the) four elements. Having done that, it establishes the unifying principle of the alphabet represent by the parallel series of its first four letters, the fourth of which — as is well known by now — is $d$ (delta), the symbol of the invisible supercelestial recursiveness which unites the four elements of the visible universe. To confirm the point, Dee’s monas hieroglyphica — which here reveals it essence as the sign of the holy unit — appears beneath the rubric $D$. Early on (ii r) Dee makes the point explicitly.
Yet from these grosse and material thynges [the objects of applied mathematics], may we be led upward by degrees [L. gradus, step of a ladder] so informing our rude Imagination, toward the conceiving of numbers absolutely (not supposing, nor admixting any thyng created, Corporal or Spiritual, to support, conteyne, or represent those Numbers imagined) that at length, we may be hable, to the finde the number of our owne name, glorious exemplified and registered in the booke of the Trinitie most blessed and eternal.

A clearer exposition of the imagination's theurgical ascent through and to the unit which is the essence of both proportion and magnitude is not possible. Dee presents an equally clear exposition of the thaumaturgical descent in the discussion which occurs in the context of a discussion of "Statike", heaviness or the modern gravity (c iii):

Thus, can the Mathematical minde, deal speculatively in his own Arte: and by good meanes, Mount above the clouds and sterres: and...he can by order, Descend to frame Natural things, to wonderfull uses: and when he list retire home into his own center: and there prepare more Means to ascend or descend by: and all to the glory of God, and our honest delectation in earth.

These two passages — and there are more similar ones — have been quoted at length because they should answer the question of Dee's relation to "science" in the modern sense once and for all. The intellectual tradition in which Dee works — Geoplatonism — is, as represented by Pico, interested primarily in theurgy. That emphasis is shown in the reference to "retiring home into his own center." In Pico, this means not only that man, because he has no specific nature, can be whatever he wants but also that he doesn't have to "be" any-thing at all. He can simply let himself be reabsorbed into the primal unum, bonum et ens which is the trinitarian origin of the universe. The tradition that Dee comes out of — the Arthurian
The gentleman was interested more in thaumaturgy than transcendence. He wanted to descend the ladder to "frame Natural things to wonderful uses" for God and country—or, better, the Tudor succession embodied in Elizabeth, the titanic monarch. The titan who first gave the fire of science to modern man was not Prometheus but Hecate. Dee performed signal two services: he discredited theurgy and exalted thaumaturgy. Both results, ironically, were unintentional but neither of the two had to do with quite what one thinks of as the science of the 1900's. 

Thaumaturgy, *Thaumaturgike*, Dee defines in the MP (A.i.r) as "that Art Mathematical, which giveth certaine order to make strange workes, of the sense to be perceived, and of men greatly to be wondered at." An art mathematical is one that has as its object the things mathematical that Dee describes early on (i) that are immaterial things, but "nevertheless, by material things hable somewhat to be signified." This signification is done through images, images which are "aggregable and divisible" by art without losing their inclusive nature which bridges the visible world of matter and the invisible world of numbers to which mathematics provides the key. What makes thaumaturgy different from the other arts is that its purpose seems somewhat less dignified than the others. One wonders how the art producing "strange works to be wondered at" fits into a list that contains geography, astronomy, navigation, architecture as well as some lesser know ad hoc arts whose practicality is nevertheless beyond question. It's as though, while reading a treatise on the civil and military application of explosives, one came on a long section devoted to firecrackers. The very incongruity suggests that this section is one of the most important in the MP for understanding Dee. The discussion of thaumaturgy notes that the effects of the
works are produced by ordinary causes, by air pressure, weights, strings, springs, and other unspecified but presumably explicable means. Dee goes on to cite orthodox precedents in the field, among them Boethius. He himself provides the example of a self-moving object which he saw at St. Denis while he was in Paris. He repeats the example of the illusion of the projected three dimensional image [holography!] either of a man walking around or the illusion of gold and jewels which prove to be only air when one attempts to touch them. All of these things, Dee reiterates, are illusions produced by, to use a modern term, the technology of special effects, yet even the most educated are taken in by them to the detriment of the producers. The implication is that there is nothing “magic” about them at all and that anyone knowledgeable in the field of mathematical perspective could account for all of them. But Dee himself puts the assurances of the normality of his special effects in an odd light with his interpretation of the passage in Cicero's *De natura deorum* (II.88) already cited (p. 72 above) as the source of the armillary sphere in the Woodstock psalter.

Cicero writes that there are people who question whether the universe came into being as the result of a divine intelligence rather than by accident or necessity. “They imagine,” he comments, “that Archimedes [the inventor of “Posidonius” sphere] showed greater powers by imitating the motions of the heavenly bodies in a model than nature does in bringing them about.” This passage becomes in Dee, “[Archimedes] did, as the God [did], which (in *Timaeus* of Plato) did make the world.” In other words, to make a model of the universe is (potentially at least) the equivalent of making the universe itself. And, although Dee does not mention it in this section, the most perfect model of the universe is his *monas hieroglyphica*, which Dee, like Plato's God, has generated mathematically *ex nihilo* from point through line.
to circle. This passage shows Posidonius' sphere in Cicero as the critical inclusive middle term which conceptually connects thaumaturgy as Dee understands it -- the sphere is his own example -- with theurgy or astrology as he understands it. This sphere also connects Elizabeth and the alchemical aspects of Hecate with Dee's talismanic astronomy to complete his creation that can now be characterized as monarchical talismanic astro-alchemy. This certainly fits Yates' specification of peculiarity and establishes Dee as a master of copious eclecticism. Dee's discussion of astrology will elucidate the point.

"Astrology," Dee defines, "is an Arte Mathematical, which reasonably [in ratios] demonstrateth the operations and effects, of the natural beames, of light, and secrete influence: of the Sterres and Planets: in every element body and elemental body: at all times, in any horizon assigned." This definition may not seem peculiar unless one keeps in mind that to Dee's mind Archimedes' sphere has been superceded by his *monas hieroglyphica* as the mathematical model of the relationship of the stars and planets. The elements are formed into bodies in analogy to the way that the planets are formed into the "body" of the universe. To discover the secret of the one is to discover the secret of the other. The emanations of Proclus which are the recursive source of the structure of the universe have become, to paraphrase Dee, natural beams -- like those of light -- which are the secret of influence of the stars and planets. As usual, the Geoplatonic interpretation is an elaboration of an analogy. Pico (p. 74 above) writes that theurgy calls "forth, as it were, from their hiding places into the light powers which the largesse of God has sown and planted in the world." Dee has discovered that the light itself is one of these powers and that understanding it serves as a model for understanding all the others. In Pico the analog of what is activated by the light
is the seed; in Dee the analog activated by the “light” is the *monas hieroglyphica* which the mathematical imagination of Dee has created and which therefore corresponds to the divine order. That explains why he calls the monas a *hiero-* (holy) *-glyph* (carved image). In the text that follows Dee cites his authorities for this quintessential Geoplatonic conception. Not surprisingly to anyone familiar with Geoplatonic proof strategies, his main witness is Aristotle. Dee substantiates the statement (b.iii) “that mans body, and all other elemental bodies [italics mine] are altered, disposed, ordered, pleased, and displeased, by the influential working of the Sunne, Mone, and the other Starres and Planets.” by multiple citations from Aristotle's works. Late in his discussion he specifies with an interesting transition of metaphors that the perfect and circumspect “astrologien” has to determine: “beside the speciall order and forme due to every seede: and beside, the nature proper to the individual matrix, of the thing produced it what shall be the heavenly impression.” This passage locates exactly at least one transition from the traditional botanizing metaphor of the seed to the mathematizing, mechanizing metaphor of the matrix.

The matrix metaphor suggests a stamp or, conversely a mold, as the word *impression* indicates. The evidence is that, intuitively, Dee is grappling with the crucial question of exactly how the monas is to convert the sun light and other astral beams into elemental bodies. His discussion of thaumaturgy suggests that he had an inkling of a mechanical model in mind. Some sort of mechanical model for the conversion was the next step up on Jacob's ladder which for some reason he never took. Be that as it may, Dee's claim in the next sentence that his *Propadeumata* has “mathematically furnished up the whole method” to make the conclusion has proven optimistic. Dee's project was not feasible even with the direction
of “supernatural influence from the Starre of Jacob” which, despite the idiosyncratic spelling starre, is certainly a reference to the stair or ladder of Jacob. There is no ready evidence that there was ever a physical star named after the patriarch and the context dictates that the phrase be a reference to the Geoplatonic ascent and descent of the structure of reality.

There are two dangers when evaluating anyone’s work, especially work as peculiar Yates’ word! as Dee’s or, for that matter, Bacon’s. Those dangers are to either overrate or underrate it. Both errors emerge from an anachronistic viewpoint which is often the result of having recruited some earlier thinker for one side or the other of some contemporary polemic. In the case of Dee and Bacon it is the great modern science question: who was the first modern scientist? There are a variety of candidates for the honor but the search itself is conducted on the basis of a Fiat Newton theory of the origins of modern science. The phrase is adapted from Pope’s couplet epitaph on Newton’s death, “And God said, let Newton be and there was light.” Actually, according to the well known source, the creator said Fiat lux [let there be light] and much, much later and independently of the original fiat, there was Newton. With all due respect to Pope and after the recent discovery that Newton wrote thousands of pages on astrology and alchemy, it should be hard to believe that “science” began with one piercing look from Newton or anyone else. Newton himself wrote that if he had seen farther than others, it was because he had stood on the shoulders and, he might have added, the toes of giants. In the ban of the Fiat Newton spell, writers feel compelled to blame or praise or blame everyone, even their obvious betters, for “contributions” or lack thereof as though their subjects had started everyday by asking themselves just what they could do to make the people of the late 1900’s happier and better. One could make a case that Bacon had
something like that in mind, but it is unlikely that his *novum organum* sprang from a concern for real people.

Let the foregoing words serve as a preface to some evaluatory observations principally about Dee and Bacon. The discussion emulates Bacon's method in his presentation of the felicities of Elizabeth by presenting the infelicities of Dee first in the best, then in the worst light. If Dee's life is looked at in terms of personality, propinquity and serendipity, a pattern emerges. Dee is a determined, talented mathematician who is at least in the top cut of his day. He comes to intellectual maturity just as the Greek phase of the philological Renaissance provides him with texts which correspond to his *homo geometricus* temperament. Foremost among these texts is Proclus' *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*. He is an accepted if minor member of the Tudor court and imbued as were they all with the Ciceronian activism that was the legacy of the Latin phase of the Renaissance. In England the earlier phase conflates with local traditions to produce the Arthurian gentleman. Dee, as he insisted throughout his life, was totally orthodox in terms of the conventions of his time and place. Dee sees that he can serve himself and his country by familiarizing himself with the international community of scholars. In short, he emulates Erasmus. Wherever and whatever he studies, Dee finds the Proclean ideas that he treasures both by nature and nurture confirmed. He doesn't realize that this is because Proclus' ideas permeated all of Western thought either directly through his *CotFB* and other works or indirectly through the offices of the anonymous author of the *Emerald Tablet*, the Arab Al Kindi, the conjectured Syrian Dionysius and the Roman Boethius as well as their more recent intellectual progeny such as Grosseteste and Roger Bacon. It as if he were in a hall of mirrors and everywhere he looks
he sees the same thing without realizing that they all come from the same source. It was not hard to believe that there was no way short of theurgy to have a Fiat Dee. If Dee was in fact following instructions received by way of Jacob's Ladder, he was only doing what Bacon recommended, but did not do, in the case of the "Ladder of the Intellect," the fourth part of his Novum Organum. As strange as the conception of Dee's pride and joy, the monas hieroglyphicus, may seem at first glance, it incorporates, literally, the principal on which Alan Turing was to build the computer. That "monas hiero-chip-icus" has in our times worked enough miracles to be considered thaumaturgic and become godlike enough to be called theurgic. Before pointing out the parallel, it is imperative to make clear that there is no intention at all to assert that Dee "anticipated" the computer or even its principles. What is asserted is that the principles are "there" to be discovered and whether or not they are applied is a question of serendipity. Dee was dealing with Dee's world and not that of the late 1900's.

In summary, Turing set out to build the simplest possible machine.1 In any machine that needs outside power the simplest operation is to turn the power on and off. What Turing did was to build all the operations of his whole machine around this initial operation. He started with nothing — off — added something at the point represented by the computer — on — then repeated this operation linearly — wrote a program — which could recycle all operations: it was recursive. As has been described, this is exactly how Dee constructed the monas. Dee's infelicity was that he had to find some way to power his "machine" by inducing supercelestial virtues, beams of light and astral influences into it. Turing had electricity, which has proven much easier to induce as well as to switch on and off. But electricity was discovered in the some four hundred intervening years of technological development. Dee's
problem has yet to be overcome. An indication of the Geoplatonic aspect of Turing's personality is his notion that his creation, the Turing machine, was the equivalent of a human being. A like notion has captured similar personalities from Paracelsus to Mary Shelley. His fascination led him to develop the Turing test which is designed to determine whether or not someone by studying the answers to questions put to a computer can determine whether they come from a person concealed behind the machine or from the machine itself. Turing posited that, should the difference not be detectable, the computer was the equivalent of a human being.

So much for the best case argument; the worst case argument follows. From at least the early 1580's Dee was involved in crystalomancy or scrying. He writes in his diary that he first saw spirits in his globe in May of 1581. Then, in March of 1582 a certain Edward Kelly, who was Dee's nemesis, presented himself at his door. Kelly had the sociopath's shrewdness for the manipulation of others' weakness. It can be said for Dee is that he sincerely wanted to believe, but sincerity is not a virtue. Kelly was a con man extraordinaire and exploited the access that alchemy and skrying gave him into Dee's gullibility. He convinced Dee that he knew where to find the philosopher's stone -- the catalyst which transforms from base to noble whatever it is applied to -- buried in the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey. Since this is the traditional burial place of King Arthur, one has no trouble imagining how the prospect lured Dee. Kelly realized that alchemy was an occult science that had great extra-legal potential. First, there was the of tricking people into giving good money for worthless conjure money. But at a more practical level it was a good way to launder money from theft or debased currency or other illegal activities. When the then equivalent of the IRS came around to
inquire about the source of the alchemist's wealth, he could simply say it was the philosopher's stone. For that reason among others the practice of alchemy was illegal.

In November of 1582 a “sudden glory” in the midst of which was the angel Uriel filled a window of his study. Dee could believe had finally put a foot on the first rung of Jacob's ladder. All this happened while he was praying, so these beings are presumably divine and not demonic messengers. This seems to have been a step forward in their working relationship, so that when Albert Laski, Count Palatine of Siradz in Poland, found his way to Dee and Kelly, he was swept away with enthusiasm for their activities. Laski had grand notions of an European empire in the east, ambitions which were not discouraged either by their supercelestial contacts or the grand prospect of having the philosopher's stone rather than more conventional financial machinery in the treasury. Laski was more than willing to finance Dee's “experiences” and, with Elizabeth's blessing, the three left England in July of 1583. Even in a straightforward excerpt for a much longer narrative, this story is bizarre. It is difficult to account for Dee's evident participation, even complicity, in this strange tale.

A possible answer that comes to mind is “Pascal's wager.” Pascal (Penseés 451) proposes a case similar to the following: someone offers odds of, say, a billion to one. In that case, no matter what the probability of winning as against losing, the bet would be irresistible. The ratio of possible loss to possible gain is absurdly favorable. As long as the Geoplatonist saw the relative value of his earthly life as against his heavenly life as one to a billion, it was absurd not to do everything imaginable to ascend to that heavenly life. Dee's service was for him a personal tragedy in that he demonstrated, sadly it seems beyond question, that the odds are not so favorable. It was left to Bacon to lift Jacob's ladder where Dee let it fall and go on.
A comparison of Dee's career with that of Columbus, however, brings out the sense in which Dee was successful. It is forgotten that Columbus' voyage in terms of his stated objective was a failure. He never discovered a westward passage to China. The looming up of the Americas in the path of his ship had more to do with serendipity than competence. He did not so much discover the Americas as sail into them. In the mathematics of navigation Dee was superior to Columbus who was a dead reckoning sailor. In maritime exploration—in terms of negative as well as positives achievements—Dee was the equal and more of Columbus. Not only was he an advisor and investor in the failure to find a Northwest Passage, he was also involved in the failure to find a Northeast Passage. But, there is no a priori reason why these passages should not have existed. Geography is not a theoretical science in the sense that physics is. It was his bad luck that there was no unknown continent for him to stumble on. Moreover, Dee's mathematical calculations were overall accurate, whereas Columbus's were dead wrong. In a scientific world which prides itself on holding falsification to be as valuable as verification. Dee would have a much higher standing than he in fact does. Finally, looking at his ascensions to and conversations with angels, etc. as parapsychology in the national interest he looks, if that is the desideratum, almost modern.

Bacon takes up where Dee leaves off with the major difference that his exceptions center on the descent phase of the ladder of nature rather the ascent. There is a progression from Pico, who mentions the practical only in passing, to Dee whose life shows an almost exact balance between the practical and the theoretical to Bacon in whose lifework the balance shifts definitely to the practical. Bacon nowhere in the fourteen tomes of his writings assembled by Spedding et al. mentions Dee directly, but there is an aspect of Bacon which is
a running polemic against Dee and that has to do with "mathematics." In NO I's aphorism xcvi he opines why there is yet no natural philosophy which is pure. This state of affairs he attributes to Scholastic logic, a favorite target of abuse, and second to the analogic — not his word, of course — of the second school of Platonists. the Geoplatonists. This second school consists of "Proclus and the others" and it is not difficult to identify the "other" who is most prominent in his personal experience: John Dee. Of this second school Bacon writes, "[A]ll is tainted...by mathematics, which ought only to give definiteness to natural philosophy, not to generate or give it birth [italics mine].” This indicates a clear apprehension on the part of Bacon of the intention of Dee's monas hieroglyphica, the engine of his natural philosophy, which was intended to generate not only natural philosophy but nature itself. Dee's life proved that hope forlorn.

But Bacon's evaluation rests on a permutation of another Geoplatonic theme: the distinction between the phantastic and the eikastic imagination. In Bacon this manifests itself as the distinction between the idols of the human mind and the ideas of the divine (I xxiii). The idols are not the idols of the iconoclast, although these would be an example, but the phantastic, distorted images which the human imagination when left to itself generates rather than the eikastic, verisimilar idea which arises in the divine mind as the idea. That would make the natural scientist the equivalent of Plato's demiurge. Bacon discusses the causes of phantasy under four headings: idols of the mind, the cave (an allusion to Plato), idols of the marketplace and idols of the theater. It is the last of these, the idols of the theater, that are of interest in the present context. He writes (xliv), "[I] judge that received systems are but so many stage plays, representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic
fashion.” The relevance of this becomes clear when he begins the next aphorism, “The human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds.” If among the received systems one numbers Geoplatonism, the justice of these observations cannot be denied. Geoplatonism is, if anything, a stage play, a drama if you will, based on the supposition of more order and regularity in the world than almost anyone finds, even some Geoplatonists. Dodds observes of that foundation text of Geoplatonism *The Elements of Theology* [1933 xxv] that “[I]n Proclus [and in his intellectual successors], ontology becomes so manifestly the projected shadow of logic as to present what is almost a *reductio ad absurdum* of logic. It is the near identity of logic and analogic in Geoplatonism that constitutes its almost fatal attraction for the homo geometricus posited in the first chapter. For anyone susceptible to the fascination of the logical argument as well as possessed by a Geoplatonic analogic imagination, the blandishments of the eikastic image would be irresistible. Dee abandoned Hecate for Calypso only shortly (see note 3, p. 120 above), but the danger is clear.

Bacon’s reservations about mathematics have little to do with a failure, as is often alleged, to appreciate the importance of quantification. Although it is true that Bacon was not by nature a homo geometricus and even more true that the nurture of his legal training made him a logician, Bacon in several places indicates the importance of mathematics. But all in all he identifies mathematics not with its proper office of giving definiteness” to natural philosophy, but with the effort to generate or give birth to a geometrician’s nature. In essence Bacon identifies mathematics with the sort of monomania he finds in theater. In the well written play every detail is subordinated to and determined by the plot, but in life itself there
is little or no plot. That is why he prefers people whose work he sees as less plotted or more empirical to those he sees as mathematical "dramatists," who plot too closely. Bacon prefers Machiavelli's Cesare Borgia to the more theatrical Arthur and himself as a scientist to Copernicus, who, as he sees him, is much too "prone to see order and regularity." He also prefers himself to the two outstanding scientists of his day he actually knew, William Gilbert (1540-1603) and William Harvey (1578-1657). Gilbert is considered the "father of electricity," a word which he coined. It is ironic, particularly if one keeps Turing in mind, that Bacon berates him as an example of someone who has converted his specialty into an entire philosophy. Gilbert was the first to recognize terrestrial gravity -- although he did not call it that -- and to conclude that some sort of magnetism keeps the planets in orbit, important discoveries, but he went on to went beyond these to convert the universe into a sort of "life and loves of the lodestone" melodrama. The second scientist Bacon knew personally is William Harvey who, besides being his personal physician, was the inventor -- discoverer -- of the circulation of the blood. Although his major work was not published until 1628, two years after Bacon's death, it is certain that Bacon knew of it. Harvey was the author of the bon mot cited in the first chapter, "[Bacon] writes philosophy like a Lord Chancellor;...I have cured him." His diagnosis was correct but his prognosis was dead wrong. Bacon wrote philosophy like a Lord Chancellor right to the end. A perceptive reader need only hear the word circle in the phrase circulation of the blood to know what Bacon objected to in Harvey's work.

The bulk of this book has been taken up with the peculiar ethos of the Geoplatonism and Arthurianism that has been shown to dominate the inner circle of Elizabeth's court. The
two are exemplified in the "Rainbow" portrait. A few words about the pathos of its main protagonist and antagonist, Dee and Bacon will serve by way of summary. First is a word on Bacon and the Arthurian gentleman. Bacon's lukewarmness toward the Tudor knighthood which was at the center of Elizabeth's court is evident. He repeatedly makes slighting remarks about its pastimes, tilts, pageants and such. As a witty child and son of the Lord Keeper he had the run of the court. Nevertheless, to his surprise, when he came of age, he was not preferred at court as he had anticipated. He held no important office under Elizabeth. He never seems to have understood in his heart of hearts that there were people who did not mean him well or that it might be better to hide his light under a bushel. The impression lingers that his "golden childhood" had left him without the sense of self-preservation that protects the less fawned over from themselves by giving them a healthy sense of their own limitations. Bacon left his fate to the future.

Dee, on the contrary, never seems never to have seriously doubted his position among his contemporaries would sooner or later be vindicated. As mentioned, apologetic polemics appear notably in the 1570 Mathematical Preface, the 1590 Compendious Rehearsal and the 1592 Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The archbishop was a member of the Privy Council and Dee hoped to expedite action on his request for a position or support. The Compendious Rehearsal was an affidavit made before two commissioners appointed by Elizabeth to investigate rumors against him which might impede such appointment. Interestingly, he states (B 4 r) that he has been in Elizabeth's survive for thirty-six years, that is since 1552 or two years before the 1554-5 Woodstock year. Since he is writing this to a member of a judicial body adjudicating his merits, there is every reason to believe this figure
is accurate. Dee says that his intention in writing is not so much to silence his slanderers as
to convince others of his merit, a textbook example of the rhetorical ploy of telling someone
something by telling his what you're not going to tell him. God has, he continues, insinuated
“into my hart an insatiable zeal & desire to know his truth...by the true philosophical method
and harmony: proceeding and ascending, (as it were) gradatim, from things visible, to
consider things invisible.” The fact that Dee precedes the italicized gradatim (by steps or
rungs) with “as it were” implies a hitherto unknown metaphorical caution in public references,
however occult, to Jacob's ladder. Dee is chastened but unbowed. He remains convinced
that he can best love, honor and glorify the framer and creator of the world “by the most
mervailous frame of the whole world, philosophically viewed, and circumspectly wayed,
numbered and measured.” Perhaps it would be best to let Einstein, the exemplary homo
gonomicus of modern times have the last word (11).

If thus [by geometry] it appeared that it was possible to achieve certain
knowledge of the objects of experience through pure thinking, this “wonder”
rested upon an error. Nevertheless, for anyone who experiences it for the first
time, it is marvelous enough that man is capable of reaching such a degree of
certainty and purity in pure thinking as the Greeks showed us for the first time
to be possible in geometry [italics mine]
Notes

Introduction

01. A reproduction of the opposite page 232 in Williams 1972. The identity of the artist is still a matter of conjecture. There is no known contemporary statement about what occasioned it or a contemporary account of the meaning of its symbolism. The only certainties are that it was commissioned around 1600 and that by Robert Cecil.

02. See Daly, ed. *Andreus Alciati, The Latin Emblems*, vols. 1 and 2

03. See Jardin, *Erasmus Man of Letters*, p. 53.

04. The term *corpus Hermeticum* refers to the fourteen documents which came into the possession of Cosimo de'Medici in 1462. He apparently hoped that the pseudographia of the purported Egyptian sage would bring him more enlightenment before his impending death than his recently acquired but still untranslated dialogs of Plato. The Latin *Asclepius* is in this pseudographic tradition, but was already in circulation long before 1462. See Copenhagen *Hermetica*, pp. xlvii-xlvi.

05. Sarah Johnson's 1990 *Hecate Soteria* [Hecate the Savior] studies both Hecate and her relation to the *Chaldean Oracles* as well as to Neoplatonism with admirable thoroughness. However, she discusses many things which have no bearing on the matters under consideration here.

06. See Dillon *The Middle Platonists*

07. The intellectual relationship between John Dee and the architect and emblematic theater director of Charles II, Inigo Jones (1573-1652) has not been investigated. The similarity between the thaumaturgy described in Dee's *Mathematical Preface* and Jones' thaumaturgical theater is striking.

Chapter 1: Images

01. Alciati in his introduction says that the (immediate) inspiration for the emblem came from the badges that the French knights wore when they invaded Italy in 1498. Of course, the practice of personal symbols and war cries (mottos) goes far back in the history of knighthood.
02. For example, the Spanish name for the Invincible Armada was the *impressa*.

03. In England the word *imperium* had to do with England's legal independence from Rome, the putative successor to the Roman Empire. It had nothing to do with other peoples' countries. That is *imperium* or *imperialism* in the Victorian sense, not the Elizabethan.

04. This is the heart of the matter in question.

05. Claudius, of course, was wrong, though not in principle as Hamlet's hesitation showed. Claudius simply overplayed his hand.

06. Those who condemn Elizabeth's use of informers had no idea of the difficulty of gathering intelligence either in her day or ours.

07. Elizabeth created nobles only reluctantly because resources had to be found to fund their titles. Worse than that, they soon got ideas of their own.

08. Since Hecate is not one of the Homeric Olympians there has been relatively little attention paid to her and, important here, her relationship to Constantinople. The Emperor Constantine left Rome to escape the authority of Roman tradition which included the Roman gods such as Victoria. He chose the strategic site of Byzantium on the Bosporus in Thrace and in 330 AD renamed it Constantinople. It was intended to be a Christian capitol for the new Christian Empire, but as elsewhere the Church had to practice the compromise of syncretism. The old gods/goddesses were either baptized into the Church under canonical names or quietly tolerated. Rothery (1915, 93-94) observes:

> It was by accident that the crescent became the Mohammedan cognizance [symbol], for it was adopted only after the fall of Constantinople, where they found the Byzantine crescent so largely used. It was the long recognized symbol of Kerdessa, "the horned" daughter of the moon goddess Io or Hera.

The moon goddess, of course, was Hecate, not Hera. There are three crescent symbols: the "horns" pointing up, the crescent moon; the horns pointing right, the increscent moon, and the horns pointing left, the decrescent moon. The Mohammedans chose the second, probably to distinguish their waxing moon from that of the Byzantines.

Rothery's quote is evidence that Hecate was alive and well around 1453 when Constantinople fell. A second quote from Biederman's article on symbolic ladders (1989, 200-201) gives further evidence: "In Byzantium, the Virgin Mary is addressed as the heavenly ladder which God descended to reach sinners and through which he enables them to reach heaven." It is striking that the details of Biederman's statement about the Virgin Mary parallels exactly the present argument about the relationship of the Virgin Hecate, the Virgin Elizabeth and the Geoplatonic ladder of nature.
Chapter 2: Images of Elizabeth

01. Cf. Marinus' Life of Proclus pp. 49-50 below.

02. That the identity of Dionysius is not known is not considered important here.

03. Camden (1422-1491), the publisher of Malory's Morte d'Arthur (1485) thought it better to accept the authenticity of the story for the public good.

04. Arthur's tutor, Bernardus Andreas, denied that the prince had been named for the legendary king. He claimed the name had been chosen for astrological reasons. Anyone familiar with Henry's exploitation of his putative Arthurian background will consider this a likely story.

05. The reader is referred to Yates's account for the details since they are not important to the present argument.

06. The rainbow appears in Genesis 9:11-13 where is the sign of God's covenant with Noah after the flood.

Chapter 3: Images of Geoplatonism

01. The most accessible version is in Rosan's 1949 The Philosophy of Proclus. The first chapter is a translation of Marinus' Life of Proclus.


03. The significance of the snake in the Judeo-Christian tradition will certainly have occurred to the reader. It is one of the wonders of copious eclecticism that this symbolism is entirely ignored in favor of its own understanding.

Chapter 4: Images of Dee

1. Paul's mirror metaphor in 1 Corinthians 13:12 is probably a reference to scrying, a very common Hellenistic practice. The text runs "For now we see through a glass darkly...." The Greek has in a enigma [in enigmas or riddles] where the KJV has darkly, a reading which suggests scrying more strongly than any other use of reflecting surfaces.

2. Elton (1955, 220), remarks that Foxe in his Martyrs "celebrated" the people executed by Mary, ignoring those executed by Henry VIII and Elizabeth, and was therefore responsible for a certain lack of proportion in discussion. Ridley (1987, 130) is more specific about the mechanism of Foxe's influence. He writes that in 1571:
Convocation ordered that copies of the second edition be placed in every cathedral along with the English Bible. Many Parish Churches also acquired copies, as did all the Oxford and Cambridge colleges, and many vicars read extracts from the [1570] Book of Martyrs along with the English Bible.

3. An illustration of the Woodstock psalter is found in Strong 1987, p. 139.

4. The affair of the books during the Woodstock eleven months is documented in Erickson (1983) on pp.135-136, in Ridley (1987) on pp. 62-63. and in Somerset (1992) on pp. 45-46. There is some variation in the number of books and the language the psalms were in.

5. A copy of Dee’s coat of arms is found in Sherman 1995, p. 105.

6. Dee’s title pages are found in Clulee 1988 between pp. 178 and 179.

Chapter 5: Images of Bacon

1. See Bacon’s title page in, Urbach and Gibson, editors.


Chapter 6: Afterimages

1. See Hodges’ Alan Turing: the Enigma (1983) for an account of Turing’s thought.

2. Pascal’s wager is somewhat more detailed, but the point is clear.

3. The standard test that the angels being conjured were angels and not demons was that they did not require the conjuror to do anything immoral. In 1587, the angels through Kelly recommended that he and Dee have their wives in common. Dee should have rejected this proposal, which violates the sacrament of marriage, out of hand. He did not. It is the identifying characteristic of activist gnostics that their illumination, their gnosis, frees them from the moral restraints of mere humanity. Here Dee succumbed to the gnostic temptation. A full account is in the article on Dee in The Dictionary of National Biography. It is an ironic thought that perhaps a Kelly exhausted by his efforts in concocting the Enochian language had the “angels” propose the wife sharing precisely because he believed that Dee could not accept it and would renounce their scrying as demonic. If so, he was wrong.

4. Both the CIA and the KGB have done much research in parapsychology. Dee fits in well.

Bibliography


Marinus. See Rosan, L.J.


Skinner, Quentin. See Schmitt, Charles b.


--- *Theater of the World*. ---, 1969


Vita

Bob Robinson was born in the northeastern corner of Mississippi on March 27, 1936. He underwent his primary education in Catholic schools in Baton Rouge, La. His secondary education he underwent in an old line boarding school in Virginia, Woodberry Forest. His strongest memories of his first stint at Louisiana State University 54-58 are the classes of Eric Voegelin who taught him to read Hellenic thought as psychological drama. The Army drafted him 59-61, posted him to code school and then to Germany. There he found he had a gift for structural linguistics and languages. Germany also offered him opportunities to experience architecture, theater and music that he had not had before. He worked as translator and interpreter.

Returning to the States in 68, he became head of the foreign language department at Episcopal High School in Baton Rouge and began graduate study of linguistics at LSU while completing his certification. In 77 he decided to undertake an acting/ directing career in New York. In 86 finding that he could not adequately pursue and acting and writing career at the same time, he decided for writing and returned to the academy as the only place which would support the kind of writing he intended to do. In 88 he completed his thesis at LSU on the relationship between Molière and Louis XIV with Edward Muir who is also interested in imagination as an instrument of policy. He intended to write his dissertation on what he saw as a similar relationship between Inigo Jones and Charles I, but research revealed that the relationship was not between them, but between John Dee and Elizabeth I. Luckily, he found Kevin Cope, who is also interested in ideas, to direct his dissertation. In the meantime he taught English at LSU and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) in Texas.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Robert Gibson Robinson III

Major Field: English

Title of Dissertation: The Rainbow Portrait and the Faery Queen: Emblem, Imagination and the Arthurian Gentleman

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

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