

Sympathy or the Devil

by Wouter Hanegraaff

from Hieronymus Bosch, *Garden of Earthly Delights* triptych

SYMPATHY OR THE DEVIL:

RENAISSANCE MAGIC AND THE

AMBIVALENCE OF IDOLS

Wouter J. Hanegraaff

Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? - In use it is *alive*. Is life breathed into it there? - Or is the use its life?

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Para 432.

Renaissance controversies over the acceptability of magic revolved largely around two quite brief but notorious fragments of the Hermetic *Asclepius* [1]. In these so-called "god-making" passages, Hermes Trismegistus describes in admiring terms the ancient Egyptian practice by which the priests used to draw down the powers of the cosmos into their temple statues. In general, the texts of the *Asclepius* as well as the *Corpus Hermeticum* are concerned more with a spiritual path of initiatic rebirth than with overt magical practice, and indeed there is no reason in principle why a consecration of statues or even an evocation of gods would have to be construed as magic rather than as a religious ceremony [2]. But it could hardly be denied that Hermes seemed to call for a breach of the Second Commandment. Not surprisingly, Saint Augustine had condemned the passages in *De Civitate Dei* and even devoted hermeticists of the Renaissance period might refer to them as an embarrassing *lapsus Hermetis*. Such a solution was hardly possible for those hermeticists whose interests led them to present *magia* as the sublime synthesis of ancient wisdom as well as the foundation for

an innovative ritual practice. In this context, it was practically impossible to avoid "graven images" as receptacles and mediums for cosmic powers; and any such reference would inevitably evoke in the mind of the readers the statues of the *Asclepius*.

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It seems to me that the question of Hermetic idolatry provides an archimedean point from which access can be gained to the complex phenomenon of Renaissance magic. The magical use of images touches upon all the important issues: the relation between magic and paganism, magic and religion, personalistic and non-personalistic explanations of magical effects, and magic and the creative imagination. It would obviously be impossible to broach all these issues within the scope of one article. I will concentrate here on some of the early Italian hermeticists, and especially on the question of hermetic *praxis* in Marsilio Ficino, Francesco Cattani da Diacceto, and Lodovico Lazzarelli. I will be mainly concerned with two questions. The first one concerns the ambivalence of images with respect to the two main explanatory frameworks provided for their magical efficacy: natural explanations in terms of cosmic sympathy, and supernatural explanations in terms of evil demons. Secondly, I will attempt to shed some light upon an intriguing problem: the suggestion that some types of hermetic practice aimed not just at drawing down "the gods" into images, but more radically at *creating* the souls of gods.



From H. C. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, (London: 1651)

Hermetism and *Telestikè*

One might perhaps expect that the "god-making passages" of the *Asclepius* were merely an embarrassment to Renaissance *magi*, which they would prefer to ignore when possible. In fact, however, these passages have directly influenced the development of Renaissance magic. In order to demonstrate their importance, it will be necessary to quote them in some detail [3]. The first mention of statues occurs in *Asclepius* 23-24:

[Hermes] And since this discourse proclaims to us the kinship and association between humans and gods, Asclepius, you must recognize mankind's power and strength. Just as the master and father - or God, to use his most august name - is maker of the heavenly gods, so it is mankind who fashions the temple gods who are content to be near to humans. Not only is mankind glorified; he glorifies as well. He not only advances toward God; he also makes the gods strong.
...

All plainly admit that the race of gods sprang from the cleanest

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part of nature and that their signs are like heads that stand for the whole being. But the figures of gods that humans form have been formed of both natures - from the divine, which is purer and more divine by far, and from the material of which they are built, whose nature falls short of the human - and

they represent not only the heads but all the limbs and the whole body. Always mindful of its nature and origin, humanity persists in imitating divinity, representing its gods in semblance of its own features, just as the father and master made his gods eternal to resemble him.

[Asclepius] Are you talking about statues, Trismegistus?

[Hermes] Statues, Asclepius, yes. See how little trust you have! [4] I mean statues ensouled and conscious, filled with spirit and doing great deeds; statues that foreknow the future and predict it by lots, by prophecy, by dreams and by many other means; statues that make people ill and cure them, bringing them pain and pleasure as each deserves .

This is followed immediately by the famous lament for the future decline of Egypt: as barbarians will occupy it, the divinities will withdraw to heaven, and the ancient land of the gods 'will be filled completely with tombs and corpses'. The theme of statues is returned to in *Asclepius* 37-38, towards the end of the treatise:

[Hermes] What we have said of mankind is wondrous, but less wondrous than this: it exceeds the wonderment of all wonders that humans have been able to discover the divine nature and how to make it. Our ancestors erred gravely on the theory of divinity; they were unbelieving and inattentive to worship and reverence for God. But then they discovered the art of making gods. To

their discovery they added a conformable power arising from the nature of matter. Because they could not make souls, they mixed this power in and called up the souls of demons or angels and implanted them in likenesses through holy and divine mysteries, whence the idols could have the power to do good and evil. ... Anger comes easily to earthly and material gods because humans have made and assembled them from both natures. ...

[Asclepius] And the quality of these gods who are considered

earthly - what sort of thing is it, Trismegistus?

[Hermes] It comes from a mixture of plants, stones and spices, Asclepius, that have in them a natural power of divinity. And this is why those gods are entertained with constant sacrifices, with hymns, praises and sweet sounds in tune with heaven's harmony: so that the heavenly ingredient enticed into the idol by constant communication with heaven may gladly endure its long stay among humankind. Thus does man fashion his gods.

This reference to the astral connection of images would naturally evoke the question of astrological determinism. It is therefore logical that the discourse on statues is followed by a discussion of the *Heimarmenè*: the cosmic order of necessity. This turns out to be the final topic of Hermes' instruction; having completed it, he leaves the sanctuary together with his three pupils (Asclepius, Tat and Hammon). What follows is highly significant. Obviously impressed by Hermes' discourse on the gods, Asclepius commits a painful blunder:

As they left the sanctuary, they began praying to God and turning to the south ..., and they were already saying their prayer when in a hushed voice Asclepius asked: "Tat, do you think we should suggest that your father tell them to add frankincense and spices as we pray to God?"

When Trismegistus heard him, he was disturbed and said: "A bad omen, Asclepius,



Hermes Trismegistus

very bad. To burn incense and such stuff when you entreat God smacks of sacrilege. For he lacks nothing who is himself all things or in whom all things are. Rather let us worship him by giving thanks for God finds mortal gratitude to be the best incense" (Copenhaver 1992, 92; cf. Fowden 1986, 143).

This is followed by the hymn of thanksgiving which concludes the *Asclepius*. The reader cannot help suspecting that Hermes must have felt rather frustrated at the doubtful effect of his teaching. Asclepius has obviously missed the point: instead of attaining *gnosis* and offering prayers of thanksgiving to the one divinity, he tries to approach the latter as though he were just another "earthly god". This distinction must be kept in mind when looking at Ficino's magic.

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Challenging the perspective of A.J. Festugière's monumental classic on hermetism, in which the Egyptian elements were reduced to the status of merely 'un peu de couleur locale' (Festugière 1944 I, 85), modern research has demonstrated that hermetism grew from Egyptian roots (Mahé 1978/1982; Fowden 1986). From the fragment of *Logos teleios* (the Greek original of the *Asclepius*) discovered at Nag Hammadi, which diverges interestingly from the Latin version, one is almost tempted to suspect that Asclepius is not familiar with Egyptian religion and needs to be initiated into its ABC by Hermes. His apparent

assumption that statues are merely pieces of stone is energetically rejected by Hermes:

[Asclepius] Trismegistus, you are not talking about idols, are you?

[Hermes] Asclepius, you yourself are talking about idols. You see that again you yourself, Asclepius, are also a disbeliever of the discourse. You say about those who have soul and breath, they they are idols - these who bring about these great events. You are saying about these who give prophecies that they are idols - these who give [men sickness and] healing ... (Robinson 1988, 344).

The indignant tones of Hermes' reprimand seem to reflect the perspective of a culture in which the very word for "sculptor" (*s^cnh*) meant "the one who makes alive" (Zandee 1992, 112). [5] Egyptian statues used to be made alive by a ritual known as "opening of the mouth". Under Greek influence, however, the gods who "possessed" the statue might also be interpreted as platonic ideas, as attested by a passing reference to statues in *Corpus Hermeticum* XVII, which must have sounded significant for Ficino:

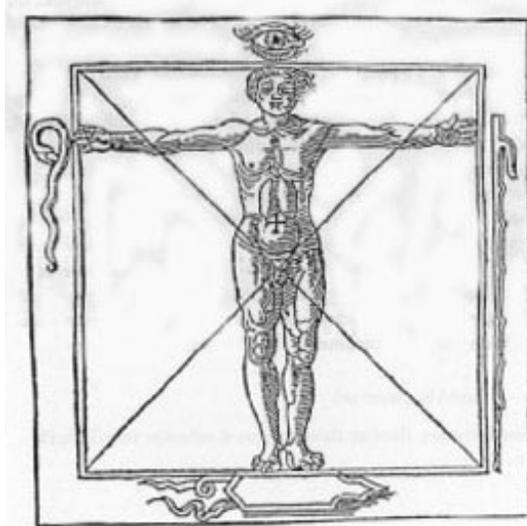
[Tat] Thus, there are reflections of the incorporeals in corporeals and of corporeals in incorporeals - from the sensible to the intelligible cosmos, that is, from the intelligible to the sensible. Therefore, my King, adore the statues, because they, too, possess forms [*ideas*] from the intelligible cosmos.

Moving on now from the Egyptian to the

Greek factor: Garth Fowden has demonstrated the significant continuities between

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hermetism and neoplatonic theurgy (1986, 126-153). From our perspective, most important is the brand of theurgy known as *telestikè*, which concentrated on the consecrating and animating of statues so as to obtain oracles from them (Dodds 1951, 292-295; Boyancé 1955; Lewy 1978, 247-248, 495-496; Majercik 1989). *Telestikè* seems to have been part of theurgy from its very origins in a (no longer extant) book of that title written during the 2nd century C.E. by Julian the theurgist, the assumed author of the basic 'code of theurgy' known as the *Oracula Chaldaica* (Luck 1989, 185ff). According to Proclus, Julian helped the Emperor Marcus Aurelius in his campaign against the Dacians by means of a consecrated human head made of clay; when turned against the enemy, it sent out flashes of lightning which drove the barbarians away in a panic (Lewy 1978, 247-248; Luck 1989, 186). Like theurgy generally, the efficacy of *telestikè* was explained in terms of *sympatheia* (Dodds, 1951, 292-293; Boyancé 1955, 195). Each god had its "correspondences" in the animal, vegetable and mineral world, and such natural substances could therefore be used as a *symbolon* of its divine cause. The substances in question were known only to the priest (*telestès*), who concealed them inside the statue. The surviving sources



From H.C. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, (London: 1651)

permit no more than a tentative reconstruction of the rituals in which such statues were used [6]. According to Iamblichus, theurgic ritual permitted a supreme experience beyond anything that might be attained by rational philosophy or expressed in words:

Intellectual understanding does not connect theurgists with divine beings, for what would prevent those who philosophize theoretically from having theurgic union with the gods? But this is not true; rather, it is the perfect accomplishment of ineffable acts, religiously performed and beyond all understanding, and it is the power of ineffable symbols comprehended by the gods alone, that establishes theurgical union. Thus we do not perform these acts intellectually; for then their efficacy would be intellectual and would depend on us, neither of which is true. In fact, these very symbols, by themselves, perform their own work, without our thinking; and the ineffable power of the gods to whom these symbols elevate us, recognizes by itself its own images. It is not awakened by our thinking (*Myst.* 96,13-97,9; Shaw's translation, 1985, 10)

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Theurgy is the work of the gods on man, not the work of man on the gods. Neither the rationale behind its operations nor the meaning of its symbols can be understood by mere humans, nor need they be: what is essential is that the ritual is performed correctly [7].

Plotinus, as well, famously referred to his mystical ecstasies which carried him beyond the realm of the expressible: 'Many times it has happened: raised up out of the body into myself, apart from all other things but self-centered, I have seen a marvellous and immense beauty ... and I attained the condition of the divine' (*Ennead* IV.8.1; quoted according to Fowden 1986, 111). Nevertheless, in spite of the similarity in terms of the goal to be attained, Plotinus seems to be the exception to the rule that neoplatonists sought to achieve it by theurgic ritual. On the one hand, as has been forcefully argued by Gregory Shaw, this means that the traditional perception of Plotinus as the representative *par excellence* of neoplatonism is in need of correction [8]; and on the other, it means that latter-day neoplatonists such as Ficino can hardly be blamed for having read his work in the context of neoplatonic theurgy. The crucial Plotinian reference in that respect, to which I will return, is to be found in *Ennead* IV.3.11.

As for the effect of theurgical rites, the evidence suggests that they usually worked (Luck 1989, 188): they produced effects which greatly impressed the participants and left them in no doubt that they had been visited by the gods and had gained access to divine insights. E.R. Dodds suggested in 1951 that theurgy knew two main modes of operation: *telestikè*, on the one hand, and trance phenomena similar to modern spiritualism, on the other (Dodds 1951, 292ff). This distinction seems to have been accepted by most modern scholars (Luck

1989, 192). Obviously, however, merely to recognize such similarities can hardly count as an "explanation". Rather, it suggests that neoplatonic theurgy as well as modern spiritualism need to be approached as two culture-specific instances of a highly complex cross-cultural domain in which the study of trance phenomena intersects with the study of ritual, and the study of which seems to require a combination of different disciplinary perspectives. Modern studies in this domain demonstrate that its significance is matched only by its extreme complexity [9], and we are as yet very far from even an approximate understanding.

With respect to the subject at hand, I merely wish to make two brief observations. Firstly, since a practice of animated statues or images is not part of modern spiritualist practice, Dodds' parallel with the latter

does not directly affect the interpretation of *telestikè*. It will be important, however, to investigate in which ways certain types of "altered states of consciousness" may contribute to the subjective perception of images and statues as being "alive". Secondly, with respect to all the phenomena mentioned (theurgy, Renaissance magic, as well as occultist spiritualism), it is important to distinguish between the two complementary phenomena of "possession" and "soul flight" [10]. *Telestikè* clearly implies the belief that invisible beings "take possession" of a material receptacle (the statue); ecstatic experiences such as referred to by Plotinus, however, imply that the soul leaves the body. What is puzzling in Iamblican theurgy is the suggestion that the one is inseparable from the other: possession of statues seems to have been seen as a means for having ecstatic experiences. As far as spirit possession in *human* mediums is concerned, the phenomenology of the subject does suggest explanations for such a combination: the spirit may manifest itself through the medium, while the latter is privately having an ecstatic experience (one soul leaves the body, another takes its place) [11]. Since this is obviously not possible in the case of statues, the question remains how to interpret the suggestion that *telestikè* is a way towards ineffable divine revelations.



A likeness of H. C. Agrippa

The unclear relation between the animation of statues and mystical ecstasy returns in the context of the Renaissance, where *magia* was presented as the sublime synthesis of religion and natural philosophy.

It will be useful to have a brief look at the great *summa* of Renaissance magic, the *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*, published by Cornelius Agrippa in 1533. Magical use of images recurs in many parts of this work, but I have found only one explicit mention of the statues of the *Asclepius*. This one occurs in chapter I, 38, simply as an example of the possibility of drawing down 'celestial, vital, intellectual and divine' gifts from above [12]. There is a significant implicit reference, however, in chapter II, 50 (on the use of celestial images):

But know this, that such images work nothing, unless they be vivified in such a way that either a natural, or celestial, or heroic, or animastical, or demonic, or angelic virtue is in them or adheres to them. But who will give a soul to an image and make a stone to live, or metal, or wood, or wax, and 'raise out of stones Children unto Abraham'. Certainly no insensitive sculptor will come into the

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possession of this *arcanum*, nor will he be able to give what he does not have: nobody has [such powers], but he who has gained control over the elements, has overcome nature, has transcended the heavens and the angels, and attains to the Archetype itself, as a cooperator of which he can indeed do anything, as will be discussed later [13].

Agrippa has just been explaining at length that images can be used for magical ends, and he now emphasizes that they only have

this power because they are vivified by higher virtues. Nevertheless, he continues by stating that only the perfect *magus* has the power to 'give a soul to an image' and make statues alive. In so doing, he imparts to them something which he has gained as a result of having completed the mystical ascent and attained to the Archetype itself. This can only mean that the soul imparted to statues is the soul of the supreme divinity itself. In spite of their resemblance, then, the two procedures are not considered to be the same: the former works with created powers, while the latter works with the power of the Creator himself. The former refers to *magia* as a means for pragmatic ends, while the latter refers to the culmination of *magia* as mystical religion. Indeed, *De Occulta Philosophia* ends with a discussion of ecstatic experiences (*furor* and *raptus*) which enable the *magus* to receive divine oracles and prophecies. The ultimate goal of Agrippa's *magia* therefore seems to be similar or identical to that of neoplatonic theurgy. The animation of statues or images is, however, not described as a means towards this goal: if they work with created powers they serve various pragmatic and useful ends, whereas the ability to animate statues with divine souls is merely a side-effect of mystical attainment.

In all this, it must be remembered that Agrippa was an intellectual and a theoretician of magic, rather than a practitioner. He was a 'nonmystical mystic' who did not himself lay claim to exalted spiritual powers (Nauert 1965, 188). Peuckert was right to describe *De Occulta Philosophia*

as essentially 'a neoplatonic credo' rather than a manual for magical practice (1948, 114ff): in spite of its notoriety, it is bound to disappoint those who want to actually do magic rather than just read about it. Agrippa's biography contains remarkably little evidence which would suggest that the most notorious *magus* of the 16th century ever devoted much of his time to practicing his magic. In this, he may have differed from some of the Italians.

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Magical Theory

That Marsilio Ficino could not possibly avoid the problem of Hermetic idolatry is obvious from the very title and subtitle of his foundational book on magic, *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* (VCC) [14]. The main title has been translated variously as "On Obtaining Life from the Heavens" or, more poetically, "On Making Your Life Agree with the Heavens" (Ficino [Kaske & Clark, eds.] 1989, 243; Ficino [Boer, transl.] 1980, 83) [15]. Indeed, Ficino's "magic" consists in various procedures for aligning one's life with the heavenly bodies, so that one may attract the most favourable and beneficent combination of celestial "gifts". Plotinus had referred to such procedures in a manner which brought them into immediate connection with the Hermetic statues:

And I think that the wise men of old, who made temples and statues in the wish that the gods should be present to them, looking to the nature of the All, had in mind that the



Another image from H.C. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, (London: 1651).

nature of soul is everywhere easy to attract, but that if someone were to construct something sympathetic to it and able to receive a part of it, it would of all things receive soul most easily (Ennead 4.3.11) [16]

Ficino presented his book as a commentary on Plotinus, in an obvious attempt to hide behind the latter's authority in dealing with such risky subjects. Thus, the subtitle reads: "In What, According to Plotinus, the Power of Attracting Favor from the Heavens Consists, Namely, That Well-adapted Physical Forms Can Easily Allure the World-soul and the Souls of the Stars and the Daemons". What, then, were these "well-adapted physical forms", and what was the nature of the "souls" they attracted?

As to the former, Ficino mostly speaks of *imagines*, meaning talismans. These are different from amulets. Amulets are objects which transmit celestial influences by virtue of the material of which they are made; talismans contain artificial marks (pictures, signs, words) (Copenhaver 1984, 530). The acceptability of amulets and talismans was debated: Augustine had condemned both, but Thomas Aquinas allowed the former (Copenhaver 1984, 531-532). Talismans were unacceptable to both authorities, because any

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artificial sign could be construed as a message directed from one intelligence (the maker or user of the talisman) to another, i.e., a demon. Talismans could obviously be

seen as merely the 'portable counterparts' (Kaske & Clark 1989, 26) of the idolatrous statues described in the *Asclepius*: the gods who "possessed" both were really demons. Thus, any magical use of *imagines*, in the broadest sense of the word, implied demonic magic and idolatry. Ficino was acutely aware of these opinions, and his discussions in *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* are full of hesitation and ambiguity: he keeps repeating that he is not defending the use of statues and images but only reporting others' opinions on them.

Ficino certainly did not wish to summon evil demons, and he probably took the warnings of Augustine and Aquinas seriously. However, from a (neo)platonistic perspective the scholastic argument that any artificial sign could only be a message to demons did not have the same force of conviction. The key to his approach lies in the fundamental doctrine of *sympatheia*.

In considering the meaning of "sympathetic magic", one easily forgets the everyday-meaning of the word "sympathy". But for Ficino, sympathy was an obvious equivalent for *love* (*amor*). Love was the foundation of magic: 'But why do we consider love to be a magician? Because the whole power of magic reposes on love. The work of magic is the attraction of one thing by another' (Ficino 1561, II, 1348 [VI, 10]) [\[17\]](#). As we will see, this way of describing the dynamics of cosmic attraction was not "merely symbolic", but was intended with a realism which is hard for us to understand today. Moreover, these neoplatonists were not thinking of "platonistic

love"! Frequently the connotations are explicitly sexual [18]. This basic conception that "love makes the world go round" found its necessary complement in the assumption of a counter-force. The magical worldview of correspondences would obviously have 'collapse[d] into undifferentiated likeness' without the understanding that certain things do *not* correspond (Tomlinson 1993, 49). Similarities stood against dissimilarities, the forces of sympathy against those of antipathy; the harmony of the cosmos could not be conceived without assuming that the forces of love and friendship were counteracted by those of strife and hostility (cf. Agrippa I, 17).

All this confirms the conclusion which was already stressed forcefully by Eugenio Garin in the 1950s. The universe of

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Renaissance magic was thoroughly animated, by means of the all-pervading *spiritus mundi*. This means that the distinction between natural and supernatural causation could not be drawn the way we have become accustomed to draw it. It is fatally anachronistic to understand it in the sense of a contrast between "material" and "spiritual". When Ficino referred to the planets and decans as "gods", he did not imply that they were *supernatural* beings who might choose to "intervene" in human affairs. Only the intelligible sphere above the fixed stars - the domain of God and the world of ideas - could be designated as supernatural; and Ficino was at pains to

point out, as we saw, that his magic was not concerned with supercelestial beings (Walker 1958, 53). Accordingly, Ficino could conceive of his "spiritual magic" (magic based upon the *spiritus mundi*) as not religious but *natural*, without denying for a moment that the heavenly bodies were animated beings.

The working of universal sympathy could be explained in different ways. Kaske & Clarke have well summarized the options:

From Plotinus, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and his own instinctive beliefs, Ficino knew that the universe is one living creature whose parts all aid and travail or rejoice with each other. Within this great macro-microcosm analogy ... Ficino sees endless contributory analogies, called *congruitates*, of substance, quality, or activity, and also ... "forms" or "images". For him, analogy can operate as a cause; a lower thing can attract a higher by being analogous to it, appealing to the love of like for like, and when it does, he calls it *illicium*, "a lure", or *esca*, "a bait". Scholars disagree as to whether any go-between ... mediates this sympathy or whether it all happens, as Plotinus says, spontaneously, by pre-established harmony (Kaske & Clark 49).

To begin with the latter: the magical use of non-causal correspondences was based upon a doctrine of "natural symbols", and was crucially concerned with images. In a classic article written in 1948, Ernst Gombrich opposes this concept to our common understanding that images must be either representations or conventional symbols

referring to abstract ideas. In a neoplatonic context, and particularly under the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, a third possibility was developed which helps to explain the close connection between magic and pictorial art in Renaissance

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culture. The conventional view of symbols assumed that they were merely an alternative for discursive descriptions. In Dionysian terms, however, the symbol became not a mere substitute for the spoken word, but a starting-point for contemplation of ideal truths which are beyond verbal expression. The role of such symbols in the context of a tripartite neoplatonic worldview was explained by Pico della Mirandola in his *Heptaplus*:

Truly, whatever is in the lower world is also in the higher ones, but of better stamp; likewise, whatever is in the higher ones is also seen in the lowest, but in a degenerate condition and with a nature one might call adulterated ... [A]mong us there is the fire which is an element; the sun is fire in the sky; in the ultramundane region the fire is the seraphic intellect. But see how they differ. The elemental fire burns, the celestial gives life, and the super-celestial loves (Pico della Mirandola 1489, 2nd Proem).

The implications were farreaching. As pointed out by Gombrich, 'the conception of an inherent and essential symbolism pervading the whole order of things offered a key to the whole universe' (1948, 168). It

opened a possibility for interpreting the mysterious myths and imagery of the ancients, such as the Egyptian hieroglyphs; but even any aspect of the natural world could be approached as 'a hieroglyph of revealed truth' (1948, 168). The key to this conception is that the correspondence between symbol and reality was not considered to be conventional, but *real*. Symbols did not "stand for" abstract concepts, but somehow *embodied* supreme realities. It has been often emphasized (Peuckert 1948, 106-107; Coudert 1978, 67) that this conception had immediate magical implications. If the visual symbol was not just a conventional sign but embodied its supra-celestial essence in a real way, it was natural to treat the two as interchangeable. Gombrich (1948, 176) has emphasized the centrality to magic of this 'most extreme position', which removes not only the distinction between symbolization and representation but threatens even the distinction between the symbol and what it symbolizes. In short, the peculiar images of planetary deities used by Renaissance magicians were neither conventional symbols for the planets, nor literal representations of demonic beings; rather, the very essence of the power embodied in the star was present - *realiter*, not *idealiter* (Deghaye 1984) - in the image.

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From a neoplatonic perspective, therefore, the efficacy of images did not necessarily have to be attributed either to demonic

intervention, or to a causal medium which transmitted heavenly influences. It could be explained in terms the causal efficacy of *form as such*, which worked by mere analogy, even without any intermediate body (Kaske & Clark 1989, 40; Ficino VCC 17; cf. Vickers 1984, 1988).

Nevertheless, a causal explanation was possible as well. Celestial influence might be transmitted from the heavenly bodies to images by means of the *spiritus mundi*. Here, we have to do with the neoplatonic notion of a "subtle body" (see Dodds 1963; Klein 1956; Walker 1958a): 'Spirit is a very tenuous body, as if now it were soul and not body, and now body and not soul' (VCC 3, 31-33; cf. Agrippa *Occ.Phil.* I,14) [19]. From the perspective of Ficino and his followers, to reduce the *spiritus* to a material medium would be equivalent to ignoring the very essence of the concept, which was intended precisely to bridge the gap between soul and body. But for this very same reason, it could not be denied that mediation by means of *spiritus* might involve the mediation of animated beings, referred to as *daemones*. Such beings might be seen as wholly positive forces, and the use of their powers might be conceived of as a *natural* process:

... paraphrasing Hermes Trismegistus, [Plotinus] says that the ancient priests or Magi used to capture in statues and material sacrifices something divine and wonderful. He holds, moreover, with Hermes Trismegistus that through these materials they did not, properly speaking, capture divinities wholly separate from matter but

deities who are merely cosmic ... - cosmic, I say, that is, a life or something vital from the Anima Mundi and the souls of the spheres and of the stars or even a motion and, as it were, a vital presence from the daemons. Indeed, the same Hermes, whom Plotinus follows, holds that daemons of this kind - airy ones, not celestial, let alone any higher - are themselves present all along in the materials and that Hermes himself put together statues from herbs, trees, stones, and spices, which had within themselves, as he says, a natural force of divinity. He added songs resembling the heavenly bodies; he says the divinities take delight in such songs and so stay a

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longer time in the statues and help people or harm them (VCC 26, 77-89).

To be sure, Ficino remained highly ambiguous about these "opinions of Plotinus and Hermes", and he ends the chapter in question (the final one of *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*) by siding with Thomas Aquinas. This is not surprising, for already Francesco Giorgi, in his important *De Harmonia Mundi Totius* (1525), commented upon the fundamental ambivalence of a notion of *spiritus* which, in all its uses, is characterized by 'a mediation between two extremes; [it] fits equally well the Holy Spirit, angels as God's, or demons as Satan's, messengers and servants, medical spirits in man, or the medium in which celestial influences are conveyed' (Walker 1958a, 113).

In sum: the fundamental fact about all the explanatory concepts used by Renaissance magic in the tradition of Ficino (sympathy, correspondence, *spiritus* etc.) is their ambiguity. Indeed, they *had* to be ambiguous, for this is what made it possible for them to explain the magical interconnection of spirit and matter in the context of a thoroughly animated cosmos. But the very same ambiguity made it impossible, even for devoutly Christian *magi* such as Ficino, ever to be completely certain whether the effect of magical images really reposed on the natural processes of universal sympathy or, as the critics claimed, on the devil and his helpers. This uncertainty is evident in Ficino's own work. Contrary to what is sometimes suggested, I believe that his continuous hesitancy in the VCC and his explicit submission to the authority of the church (VCC, Ad lectorem) is not merely due to fear for the censors but reflects genuine worries [\[20\]](#).

Magical Praxis

Marsilio Ficino

A good example of Ficino's caution and doubt can be found in VCC chapter 15. Ficino hints at actual magical practice, but stops short at admitting that he ever did use talismans:

As soon as I had explored these things thus far, while I was still a youth, I greatly rejoiced, and I planned to engrave a lodestone as best I could with the figure of the celestial Bear

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Moon was in one of her better aspects with it and then to suspend it from my neck with an iron thread. Then at last, I was hoping, I would share in the power of that constellation. But when I had explored further, I found in the end that the influence of that constellation is very Saturnine and Martial, I learned from the Platonists that evil demons are mostly northern ... I learned from the theologians and Iamblichus that makers of images are often possessed by evil daemons and deceived ... (316).

Ficino says that he 'planned' to make an astral talisman and use it, but that his enthusiasm was dimmed when he had 'explored further' and 'found' that the influence might be less benign than he had hoped. The reader is left wondering whether these 'explorations' were literary or practical, and whether Ficino's conclusion was based upon reasoning or upon practical experience. I find it hard to imagine that Ficino did not indeed experiment with talismans, at least in his youth; but his suspicion that their efficacy might be caused by the devil rather than by sympathy may well have been genuine.

D.P. Walker (1958, 30) has provided us with a 'conjectural interpretation' of Ficino's *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, which pictures Ficino as engaged in ritual practice. The primary *modus operandi* of such a ritual would have consisted in subjecting all the five senses

simultaneously to the influence of one heavenly body or constellation. Here, it must be kept in mind that Ficino thought of the bodily senses as the five lower stages in a sevenfold hierarchy. The order is: (1) touching (2) tasting (3) smelling (4) hearing (5) seeing (6) imagination (7) reason. These seven 'pleasures' are discussed (*De Vita II*, 15) in the context of a fascinating juxtaposition of Venus and Mercurius, who are pictured as competing for the allegiance of human beings. Venus stands for the senses, Mercurius for reason; and during the course of the 'five ages of man', the power of Mercurius should gradually gain dominance over the power of Venus. Ficino's discussion clearly reflects the perspective of a philosopher who knew that he was born under the sign of Saturn (i.e. Mercurius) and, at 56, considered himself an old man (Boer 1980, xxiii). We are not surprised, therefore, to see him warn his younger readers that 'Venus comes before your face as a friend, secretly as an enemy'. Venus seduces you by the pleasures of 'touching' (i.e., bodily pleasure), but she is not really interested in you: she merely uses you as an instrument for procreation:

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Venus endowed you with only one pleasure, and that harmful, with which she harms you but profits those to come, little by little draining you as it were through a secret pipe, filling and procreating another thing with your fluid, and leaving you finally as if you were an old skin of a cicada drained upon the

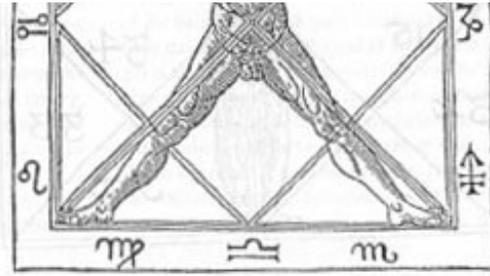


ground, while she looks after the fresh cicada (*De Vita* II, 15) [21].

Barely better than sexual pleasure is the second sense, smelling, which Ficino seems to associate mostly with gluttony. These two pleasures ("promised, rather than given" by Venus) are ultimately 'lethal' (*letiferas*). Ficino, however, has an alternative:

but I promise you with the kindness of a father and a brother five pleasures, and five I give, pure, perpetual, and wholesome, of which the lowest is smelling; the higher, in hearing; the more sublime, in seeing; the more eminent, in the imagination; the higher and more divine in the reason (*De Vita* II, 15) [22].

Thus, the rejection of the two lowest senses is compensated for by the addition of two higher, supra-sensual pleasures. It is in this context that we must understand the conjectural ritual described by Walker, by which Ficino tried to 'draw down' the power of the sun. Obviously there is no 'touching' here; but even the second sense (tasting) is given its due in the refined form of sipping some wine from time to time. Ficino addresses the sense of smelling by burning the correct (i.e., "solar") sort of frankincense. He addresses hearing by playing a *lira da braccio* or lute decorated with a picture of Orpheus charming animals, trees and rocks; and he sings the Orphic Hymn of the Sun. The highest bodily sense, sight, is represented by his contemplation of a talisman. And of course he takes care that 'in day-time he is in sunlight, and at night he



Another image from H.C. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, (London: 1651).

"represents the sun by fire" (Walker 1958, 30). Walker does not mention the two highest 'pleasures', imagination and reason, but they are crucial for understanding the meaning of such rituals. Within a neoplatonic/hermetic context, the "outward" ritual could not possibly be effective unless it would be complemented by an appropriate "inward" state of mind: it is only by means of the *imaginatio* that it was considered possible to bridge the gap between the sensual world - the observable realities of ritual practice - and the intellectual world.

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Diacceto

Walker has called attention to the far more explicit and detailed description of ritual practice found in the work of Ficino's pupil Francesco da Diacceto (1466-1522). Diacceto's first contact with Ficino seems to date from 1492 (Kristeller 1956, 297), i.e., several years after the publication of *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*. He became one of Ficino's favorite pupils, and after the master's death in 1499 he came to be considered his successor. Indeed, his philosophical work is completely in line with Ficinian neoplatonism; but Walker emphasizes that, being theologically naive, he was less concerned than his master to christianize Plato or Plotinus. Accordingly, he is 'much less discreet, and hence more informative, than Ficino on the subject of Neoplatonic magic and astrology' (Walker 31). For the complete fragment in question, I refer the reader to Walker's translation

(1958, 32-33). It is part of Diaceto's most important work, *De Pulchro*, which survives in only one manuscript. It was begun in 1496 and finished in the year of Ficino's death, 1499. The information allows us to analyze the different aspects of the ritual as follows:

1. Intellectual framework.

a. Elective astrology [23]. The correct timing of the ritual was essential. For example, the practitioner who wanted to attract 'solarian gifts' should practice the ritual while the sun was ascending in Leo or Aries and on the day and in the hour of the sun. Likewise, an image of the sun [see 2e] has to be engraved 'when the sun is ascending in the first face of Leo'; solarian unguents [2c] have to be made under the same celestial aspect.

b. Astral correspondences. The practitioner had to know precisely which 'plants, animals, odours, figures, harmonies, hymns and ceremonies' correspond to each planet (in this case: to the sun).

2. Ritual paraphernalia.

a. Clothing: the practitioner is dressed in 'a solarian mantle of a solarian colour, such as gold, and crowned with a mitre of laurel'.

b. An altar, made of solarian materials.

c. Smells: Myrrh and frankincense, 'the sun's own fumigations'; unguents, made from saffron, balsam, yellow honey 'and

anything else of that kind'.

d. Sounding object: a musical instrument ('cithara').

e. Visual objects: the floor is strewn with 'heliotrope and suchlike flowers'; there is 'an image of the sun in gold or chrysolite or carbuncle, that is, of the kind they think corresponds to each of the sun's gifts'; there is mention of 'the cock and the ram' [24] [i.e., probably an image of them].

3. Ritual action.

a. Burning of myrrh and frankincense.

b. Singing of the Orphic hymn of the sun, addressed to the divine Henad, the Mind, and the Soul of the sun ('since One, Mind, Soul, are the principles of all things'); accompanied by 'a threefold harmony, of voice, of cithara, and ...'

c. '... of the whole body, of the kind he has discovered belongs to the sun', i.e., a solarian dance. This dance must be neither too complex and frivolous nor too solemn, but one which 'both is joyful by its simplicity and at times does not avoid a mood of gravity'.

4. Mental disposition.

To all the foregoing, the practitioner 'adds what he believes to be the most important: a strongly emotional disposition of the imagination, by which, as with pregnant women, the spirit is stamped with this kind of

imprint, and flying out through the channels of the body, especially through the eyes, ferments and solidifies, like rennet, the kindred power of the heavens'.

5. Goal of the ritual.

In general: 'to acquire solarian gifts'. As for precise application, Diaceto mentions curing diseases; in this case, what is needed is 'an image of the sun enthroned, crowned, and wearing a saffron cloak, likewise a raven and the figure of the sun' [\[25\]](#).

I would like to make the following comments. Firstly, we must realize that rituals of this sort could not be organized *ad hoc* but would require quite a deal of preparation. The fact that images and unguents had to be engraved and prepared under the correct astrological constellation means that either the practitioner himself had to plan the ritual well in advance (waiting for one correct moment to engrave an image, then for a next one to make unguents - unless these two activities could be done simultaneously, which is hard to imagine -, and finally for a next one to actually do the ritual), or that

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he had access to prefabricated materials. The last option would imply the existence of an organized business of manufacturing astral magical tools in Florence in this period; I do not know whether any evidence to that effect exists. If it did not exist, ritual practice must have involved the practitioner in a lot of planning and calculating; rituals therefore

cannot have been very frequent, and are unlikely to have been used for trivial purposes. Secondly, as noted by Walker, the solarian clothing and the altar are not mentioned by Ficino. This is hardly surprising. Precisely this combination would make the practice look like a religious ceremony competing with Catholic ritual: it seemed to turn the practitioner into a priest, addressing strange gods [26] at an "alternative altar". If Ficino himself did use these paraphernalia, he would obviously have kept silent about them in his writings; and it would have to be kept a secret generally, probably known only to close pupils such as Diacceto. Absence of proof is therefore certainly no proof of absence; but it is equally possible that the solarian clothing and altar are additions invented by Diacceto. In this case, since *De Pulchro* was written in Florence in the close presence of Ficino, the latter must at least have known about them. Thirdly, notice that there is no direct suggestion that the image of the sun (any more than the heliotropes, raven, cock and ram) functioned as a receptacle "possessed by" a god. Judging from the evidence, they merely served to render the power of the sun physically present, and we have seen that such presence was not thought of as "merely symbolic" but as actual and real. This brings us back to the central problem of the "ambivalence of idols". There can be little doubt that Ficino and Diacceto believed the power of the "gods" to be actually present during the rite: in the image of the sun, no doubt - but also in the music, the odours, the flowers, the clothing, and the altar. But we

should realize that a belief that the ritual caused the image of the sun to be "animated" and "possessed" by an intelligent being - the way the statues of the *Aclepius* were possessed by the Egyptian deities - would have implied that not only this image was "possessed", but all the other corresponding paraphernalia as well: the flowers, the music, even the smells! Clearly this was not intended. Explanations in terms of universal sympathy, on the other hand, could easily account for the ritual. Again and again, Ficino argues that just as the strings of one well-tuned lute are moved by themselves in harmony with the sound made by another lute, just so the *magus* who brings himself in

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harmony with the sun will receive the power of the sun. This does not automatically imply, however, that Ficino's and Diaceto's magic was indeed merely spiritual and not demonic. The sharp distinction between these two alternatives is a rather artificial construction introduced by Walker: Ficino himself, as we have seen, constantly blurs them [\[27\]](#).

Walker refers to these rites as 'religious or magical' (1958, 30). This formulation reflects an unfortunate hiatus in his foundational study of Renaissance "magic": even in Walker's 'General Theory of Natural Magic' (pp. 75-84), the whole discussion is based upon an intuitional definition, which assumes a distinction between "magic" and "religion" without ever spelling it out. When we read that 'magic was always on the point of

turning into art, science, practical psychology, or, above all, religion' (1958, 75-76), this clearly begs the question of how Walker defines magic and demarcates it from religion. Some scattered hints suggest that he may have thought in Frazerian terms [28]. Given the untenability of the latter's distinction between religion and magic, which becomes most evident precisely in the case of idols and images (Hanegraaff 1998), this is all the more reason to ask ourselves on what basis Ficino's assumed ritual practice should be referred to as magic at all. I suggest that the ambivalence derives mainly from the question of the assumed *goal* of the ritual. Ficino's *De Vita* is presented as a treatise on health, i.e., oriented towards pragmatic ends; but the discussion also makes clear that Saturnine intellectuals cannot attain health unless they follow their calling, i.e., unless they free themselves from the senses and strive for contemplation of the intellectual world. We encountered essentially the same tension in Agrippa, where a concentration on pragmatic goals is eventually replaced by a concentration on the "religious" goals of prophecy and mystical ecstasy. This constellation seems, indeed, to be a general characteristic of so-called "Renaissance magic". Again and again, even in the explicitly "magical" occult philosophy of Agrippa, the general framework is one of a spiritual path oriented towards the attainment of *gnosis*. The pragmatic aspect oriented towards short-term goals may get a lot of attention, but in the end it is always subordinate to the long-term goal of mystical attainment.

It may not be superfluous to repeat that, of the authors discussed so

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far, only Agrippa explicitly referred to this path towards *gnosis* as *magia*. Ficino's *De Vita* is explicitly about health, not magic. Diaceto's *De Pulchro* takes the problem of beauty as the starting point for a comprehensive treatment of metaphysics (Kristeller 1956, 305); magic is discussed only as part of a broader framework, which describes the ascent of the soul to the intelligible world, and culminates in an ecstatic experience. Similarly, Lodovico Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis* is about a process of mystical rebirth and "regeneration" rather than about magic. What makes this text relevant for us is the remarkable role played in the process by the "making of gods".

Little is known about the author [29]. Lazzarelli (1450-1500) was one of the many minor Italian humanists of the period, part of whose works are still accessible only in manuscript. He seems to have studied mathematics and astrology, and Greek as well as Hebrew. We are told that Lazzarelli exorcized impure spirits by the sign of the cross, predicted the future, and at one time fell under the suspicion of magical practice (Kristeller 1938, 226). Especially interesting is his connection with the strange figure of Giovanni "Mercurio" da Correggio (?1451-?), a wandering prophet who made a spectacular appearance in Rome on palm

sunday 1485. The episode has been described in detail in an anonymous *Epistola Enoch*, attributed to Lazzarelli [30]. Correggio rode to the Vatican on a black horse, then left the city, to return riding a donkey, clothed in a blood-stained linen robe, and carrying a crown of thorns on his head. Correggio presented himself to the people as Jesus of Nazareth's chosen servant and son, and referred to himself as Pimander. This, as well as his added name Mercurio, demonstrate his self-identification as the *hermetic* Christ [31]. Lazzarelli appears to have seen in Giovanni da Correggio his spiritual master, who had effected his "spiritual regeneration" [32]. It is in this context that the *Crater Hermetis* must be understood.

This fascinating and enigmatic work certainly does not hide its dependence upon the hermetic *Asclepius*. Both works are written as a dialogue in which a master instructs his pupils into the way towards spiritual rebirth and the attainment of *gnosis*; and in both cases, as will be seen, the instruction culminates in the supreme mystery of the "making of gods". This open and explicit emphasis on precisely the most controversial aspect of the entire hermetic legacy, which is treated not as an embarrassment but as the most crucial part of "hermetic rebirth", is surprising to say the least. The *Crater Hermetis* reflects the influence, not only of the *Asclepius*,

discussed in C.H. IV; and, as in C.H. XVI and XVII, the instruction is addressed to a king. The instructor is Lazzarelli himself, who therefore takes the place traditionally reserved for Hermes or Asclepius; the pupil is King Ferdinand of Sicily and Aragon (died in 1494). In the original version of the *Crater*, written not long before 1494, there is a second pupil present as well: a cultured intellectual called Pontanus [33].

Both pupils are instructed by Lazzarelli in the way towards self-knowledge, which is knowledge of God (*Crater* 18,2). This "way of Hermes" (to adopt here the formulation of Garth Fowden: 1986, 110-111) is presented as both Christian and hermetic (*Crater* 4,1). Lazzarelli's own spiritual authority rests upon the *gnosis* imparted to him by Pimander, who is none other than Jesus Christ: 'He that was Pimander in the mind of Hermes, has deigned to take up residence within me as Christ Jesus, and has consoled me by illuminating my mind with the light of Truth, being the everlasting Consoler' (*Crater* 1,2) [34]. What the reader (and, presumably, the king) cannot know is that Lazzarelli owed this enlightenment to his master, the "hermetic Christ" Giovanni da Correggio [35]. After a long prayer to God (*Crater* 5,3), Lazzarelli begins his instruction. Again and again, however, he is interrupted by questions put to him by the king. The latter is the very type of the enthusiastic pupil, who is curious about everything and is not easily satisfied, thus forcing Lazzarelli into long digressions and elaborations. Finally, however, Lazzarelli comes to speak into more detail about God and the knowledge of God. His discourse

does not miss its effect on the king, who (echoing similar statements by pupils in the original hermetic dialogues), exclaims 'I feel wholly changed by your words today, Lazzarelli, wholly in ecstasy, wholly beyond myself' (*Crater* 22,1). Lazzarelli comments that the king is in fact experiencing the beginning of his transformation or transmutation (*immutatio*) into a "true human being". He continues his instruction with a long hymn of divine contemplation, which has the effect of instilling an ardent love for God in the hearts of his pupils (*Crater* 24,1). Now that his pupils are in the required state of spiritual exaltation, Lazzarelli finally begins to unveil the supreme mystery of *gnosis*.

The mystery reposes upon the knowledge of God's *fertility*. Man, being created in God's image, shares in this same divine power of

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fertility; and likewise has he received from God the faculty of immortality. Now, these two - fertility and immortality - make possible the creation of a 'divine offspring' (*divinam sobolem*; *Crater* 25,3). This is not a question of bodily but of spiritual procreation (*Crater* 25,2), and it must be taken not metaphorically but literally: Lazzarelli emphasizes that he is speaking about 'mental generation in a literal sense' (*de univoca mentis generatione*; *Crater* 25,4). Not surprisingly, the king still does not have a clue of what Lazzarelli is talking about; he becomes ever more excited and impatient, and exhorts Lazzarelli to finally come to the

point. In response, Lazzarelli sings the "hymn of divine generation", which at last makes clear that he is referring to the mystery of god-making referred to in the *Asclepius*. Couplets 11-13 of *Crater* 27,1 are a close paraphrasis of the latter's chapters 23-24 and 37-38.

This is certainly the newest novelty of novelties
and a greater miracle than all others
that man has discovered the nature of God
[\[36\]](#)
and knows how to make it
For just as the Lord or God the begetter
(*genitor*)
generates the celestials and procreates the
angels
who are the forms of things, the heads [\[37\]](#)
and first examples of all,
just so the true man creates divine souls
(*divas animas*)
which the ancient host used to call gods of
the earth,
who are glad to live close to human beings
and rejoice at the welfare of man.

(*Crater* 27,1) [\[38\]](#)

T h i s *arcanum arcanorum*, Lazzarelli continues, is known to him not only from the authority of the ancients, but from personal experience (*Crater* 28,1). It is the supreme mystery, which must not be divulged to the profane and the inexperienced. For this reason, few ancient authorities have openly discussed it. But Hermes in *teleios logos* has spoken about it, and Enoch seems to have done the same. Moreover, Abraham in the

book *Sepher Izira* has described how "new humans" can be made. One must go to a lonely mountain

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where no cattle grazes, and from the middle of it take *Adama*, i.e., red virginal earth; from this, one must make the form of a man, on the members of which letters must be applied in the correct manner. According to Lazzarelli, this must be read metaphorically: the lonely mountains are the divine sages who are avoided and despised by the multitude, the cattle means the bodily senses which must be disregarded, and *Adama* is the mind of the wise man from which a new man is formed by words pronounced in mystical fashion. Finally, Christ himself has revealed this secret, and it can be found in a concealed form in the books of the Old and the New Testament.

The king now desires to learn how to accomplish this great work. But since it has grown late, Lazzarelli proposes to postpone further explication for a later opportunity, adding that the mystery of divine generation should preferably be discussed in another, more remote and secret place. In this context, he adds a remark which is interesting with respect to the tension between magical arts and mystical contemplation:

For about the word in Genesis [\[39\]](#) "Abraham gave to Isaac all that he possessed, but to the sons of his concubines he gave presents", the kabbalists say that what was

given to the sons of the concubines is the *Scemoth Sceltoma*, that is to say, the names of impurity, i.e. the art of magic. But what was given to Isaac were certain divine secrets, which ... were called Kabbalah, a name which in our time is becoming known to some. But how it works is unknown to all, with the exception of one person (*Crater* 30, 3)[40].

Apparently, Lazzarelli realizes that his description of the mystery of "god-making" evokes associations with magic, and is concerned to demarcate the latter from the true mystery of (re)generation. The *Crater Hermetis* ends, like the *Asclepius*, with a hymn of thanksgiving to God. About the further instructions promised by Lazzarelli to the king, no more is known to us.

What is to be made of Lazzarelli's supreme mystery of "generating souls"? Several of the greatest modern scholars in the field have proposed interpretations, and it is with considerable trepidation that I venture to add my voice to theirs. I would like to begin by calling

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attention to the innovative elements in Lazzarelli's adaptation of the *Asclepius*. 1. The *Asclepius* celebrates the 'wonder of all wonders' that man has discovered 'the divine nature (*divinam naturam*) and how to make it'; Lazzarelli, however, writes specifically 'the nature of God (*naturam Dei*) and ... how to make it'. 2. The *Asclepius* states that the ancestors make statues but could not make souls, and therefore called up the souls of

demons or angels and attracted them into the statues; Lazzarelli, however, states precisely that man has discovered how to make divine *souls*.

What can he possibly have had in mind? Kristeller has emphasized that Lazzarelli interprets the fragment of *Sepher Izira* (on which, see below) not literally but allegorically, and suggests that the same is true of his references to hermetic "god-making". The *divas animas* are not demons, as one might think at first sight, but 'human beings like he himself who, by the effect of the *generatio*, are elevated to a divine mode of existence and have received the faculty of prophesying and doing miracles' (Kristeller 1938, 239). This regeneration is effected by the master, who imparts his wisdom to his disciple and thus elevates him to a superior level of existence. This interpretation indeed fits very well with the general tendency of the *Crater Hermetis* to describe the pupil as being transported to ever more exalted states of ecstasy merely by listening to the words of the master. Nevertheless, as remarked by Moreschini (1985, 215-216), this interpretation seems to dispose too easily of the purely hermetic, i.e., pagan - side of Lazzarelli's *Asclepius* references. Indeed, I do not see how Kristeller's interpretation might account for the third couplet quoted above. Moreschini maintains that Lazzarelli may indeed have thought of "creating demons", thereby adopting the interpretation given by D.P. Walker in 1958. Walker saw in Lazzarelli's mystery more than just a description of Christian regeneration: 'It was a magical operation by which the master provided his

disciple with a good demon. The operation consisted mainly of words sung in some special manner. These sounds themselves became the demon ... Lazzarelli was not summoning demons; he was making them' (Walker 1958, 70-71). But how? We do not know whether Lazzarelli had read Ficino's *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, but if he had, he could have read there the following passage on the magical power of music:

Now the very matter of song, indeed, is altogether purer and

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more similar to the heavens than is the matter of medicine. For this too is air, hot or warm, still breathing and somehow living; like an animal it is composed of certain parts and limbs of its own and not only possesses motion and displays passion but even carries meaning like a mind, so that it can be said to be a kind of airy and rational animal (VCC 21, 81-85) [\[41\]](#).

Walker refers to this same passage in order to explain the nature of Lazzarelli's "god-making"; and Michael J.B. Allen has suggested more recently that Ficino indeed broached the possibility that by making music we are in fact 'making demons' (Allen 1989, 172; Tomlinson 1993, 125) [\[42\]](#). Such a conception could be supported by theories of the imagination as found in al-Kindi's influential *De radiis*: 'when man, using his imagination, conceives of some corporeal thing, this thing acquires an actual existence according to the species in the imaginative

spirit' [43]. It seems that Ficino was not alone in taking such ideas seriously. From a neoplatonic context, it was only natural to assume that the intermediate faculty of the *imaginatio* would correspond to an intermediate soul or "subtle body" (Klein 1956, 22), and the idea that a living soul or demon can be created by the human imagination is indeed a recurring one at least since Ficino [44]. If we interpret the *Crater Hermetis* from this perspective, I suggest that Lazzarelli adapted the *Asclepius* precisely in order to demonstrate the superiority of Correggio's *Christian* hermeticism. The ancient Egyptians, who 'erred gravely on the theory of divinity', were obliged to draw down divine souls because they could not themselves make them (*Asclepius*, 37). The Christian hermeticist, however, has the correct doctrine [45]; he has discovered the nature of God himself and can therefore do what the ancients could not: create divine souls. It is fully in line with this, that the *Crater Hermetis* contains no trace of astral magic: to draw down gifts from the stars by magical means has become superfluous for those who have inherited Abraham's gift to Isaac, i.e., the divine mysteries of kabbalah.

Still the question remains why, in order to achieve spiritual *gnosis*, it should be considered important for the pupils to be 'provided with a good demon'. Indeed, we have not yet reached the end of the story. In a fascinating article which opens up vast new vistas on the relation between hermeticism and Judaism, Moshe Idel has approached our problem from the perspective of Lazzarelli's

reference to the *Sepher Yezira* (Book of Creation): the foundational text of Jewish speculation on the making of a golem or artificial man. Several commentators (Walker 1958, 68 nt 5; Secret 1964, 75; Coudert 1978, 78 nt 91) have been puzzled by the fact that the text referred to by Lazzarelli does not in fact appear in the known versions of the *Sepher Yezira*; but this riddle is explained by its appearance in a commentary on it written by the early thirteenth-century author Elazar of Worms [46], which in turn was included in the *Collectanaea* of Pico della Mirandola's Jewish teacher, Yohanan Alemanno (Idel 1988a, 68; cf. 1990, 190 nt 53). Now, not only were Alemanno and Lazzarelli living in northern Italy in exactly the same period, but their interpretations of the meaning of the *Sepher Yezira* display suggestive similarities as well. Idel's discussion makes it extremely likely that Lazzarelli's peculiar interpretation of the "golem" passage - i.e., as referring to spiritual rebirth rather than the magical creation of an artificial anthropoid - was derived via Alemanno from the "prophetic or ecstatic kabbalah" of Abraham Abulafia (13th cent.) [47]. In his *Collectanaea*, Alemanno quoted extensively from Abulafia's *Life of the World to Come*, which contains the following passage:

The greatest deed of the deeds is to make souls, which is the secret [meaning] of [the verse]: and the souls which they had made in Haran [48]. Since God made man perfect, in

the image of God He made him, and [therefore] this deed is with us the best of all deeds. This is why every learned person is obliged to make souls more than he is obliged to make bodies; his obligation to create bodies being intended to refer only to his making souls, this being the way a man can imitate his creator [\[49\]](#).

I think that this passage might well contain the key to Lazzarelli's *Crater*. Just as God created Adam, so man can create souls of *Adama*; both processes are presented as *generatio mentis*, analogous but superior to sexual generation. All the evidence indicates that this should be understood in the context of those tendencies in Jewish esotericism which saw the creation of the golem not as a magical means to achieve pragmatic ends, but as an end in itself: 'a ritual of initiation into the secret of creation', culminating in an ecstatic experience (Scholem 1965, 177, 184). Abulafia himself ridiculed the 'folly of those who study the *Book Yetsirah* in order to make a calf; for those who do so are themselves calves' [\[50\]](#).

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Idel therefore provides us with what seems to be the essential missing piece. Nevertheless, it seems to me that his own interpretation of Lazzarelli's mystery of "creating souls" is not supported but contradicted by the evidence he adduces. According to Idel, 'Lazzarelli did not create demons, but attracted them into the body of the king. ... The king played the role of an idol

into which the divine soul was introduced. In Jewish terms, the king is conceived of as a golem, and Lazzarelli's task was to vivify him by attracting the spiritual powers into the king's limbs by incantations of combinations of letters' (Idel 1988a, 68). This in fact amounts to an interpretation in terms of magically induced "spirit possession". Idel defends this interpretation by arguing that this accords with the passage in the *Asclepius* 'concerning the incapacity of man to create souls, but his ability to attract souls into already existing idols'. Of course this is true; but for some reason Idel ignores the fact that it is precisely on this crucial point that Lazzarelli *diverges* from the *Asclepius*, and that the very relevance of his Abulafia quotation rest upon that same divergence. His evidence therefore militates against his interpretation rather than in favour of it.

I summarize my interpretation. Firstly, I see no evidence that Lazzarelli understood the *Asclepius* passages as referring either to *telestikè* or (contra Idel) to astral magic: in contrast to the original meaning, nothing is "drawn down" or "captured" into statues or images. Secondly, I see no evidence either (contra Idel) that the mystery involved "spirit possession": no 'demons', 'divine souls' or 'spiritual powers' were attracted into the king. Thirdly, however, the mystery involved more than just 'ordinary Christian regeneration' or 'the familiar regeneration of conversion' (Walker 1958, 70; contra Kristeller): the talk of "creating gods" was more than just a metaphor. Fourthly, the importance of "creating souls" does not imply (contra Walker) that the *goal* of the whole process

was to 'provide the king with a good demon'.

The goal was, rather, the attainment of a superior *gnosis*, which naturally entailed the attainment of superhuman powers. The "true human being", who had 'discovered the nature of God' himself, would partake of the latter's creative/generative power; and he would indeed know 'how to make it', i.e. how to procreate a 'divine offspring'. Such a man would indeed be able to 'do anything' (to

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quote Agrippa, whose reasoning is closely analogous). Since the ability to create souls is the example *par excellence* of God's creative/generative power, man's attainment of divine perfection quite simply *required* that ability. Perhaps the "true human being" would not even have to demonstrate or prove his power, either to others or to himself; the confident certainty of his powers followed from his personal experience of rebirth. Lazzarelli must have read and interpreted Hermes Trismegistus' *Asclepius* as the prophetic announcement of a mystery which was destined to attain to its fulfillment in Christianity. For Hermes Trismegistus, the greatest pagan sage, the supreme miracle had consisted in man's discovery of the divine nature and the procedure for drawing down the souls of the gods into statues. The *creation* of such souls still lay beyond his horizon. Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio, the "hermetic Christ", had now brought the *new* and final hermetic revelation ('the newest novelty of novelties'), which surpassed even Hermes' wisdom: through Christ, man could

overcome his alienation and attain to the condition of the Creator himself.

All things considered, there is nothing too surprising about the fact that Lazzarelli's teaching culminates in the making of souls. The essential simplicity of his religious (rather than magical) doctrine is perhaps best illustrated by the following dialogue, which emerged spontaneously in an improvised piece of children's theatre (Sexson 1992, 61):

Boy: *What are you?*

Zeus: *Gods.*

Boy: *What are Gods ?*

Buddha: *We make things.*

Indeed, a God who cannot make things can hardly be called a God. What else could a process of spiritual "divinization" be expected to culminate in, if not in the most difficult of all accomplishments: the creation of souls?

Conclusion

We started with the cult of animated temple statues, moved on from there to the practice of astral magic, and ended with an initiatic process

activity, but in fact they appear continually to shade into each other. The few examples I have been able to discuss here demonstrate the impossibility of drawing too sharp distinctions, not only between "natural" and "demonic" magic, but between "magic" and "religion" as well. Unambiguous lines of demarcation between such categories do not exist except in the realm of pure theory, and can be (approximately) imposed upon reality only in the terms of strict discursive language. Such a procedure is quite legitimate in itself, but only as long as one does not forget its strictly heuristic instead of descriptive nature. Whenever we return from the realm of theory to that of reality, the sharp lines begin to blur before our eyes, and we find that we are looking at an intermediate spectrum filled not with words but with images. It seems to me that precisely this phenomenon defines the necessary boundary conditions for any scholarly study of "magic", as well as the inevitable limitations of its possible results.

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NOTES

¹ In her justified concern to emphasize the importance of magic in the Renaissance, Frances Yates misleadingly suggests that these fragments are representative of the treatise as a whole: 'The *Asclepius* purports to describe the religion of the Egyptians, and by what magic rites and processes the Egyptians drew down the powers of the cosmos into the statues of their gods' (1964, 3). Actually, the art of drawing down the souls of demons or angels into statues is mentioned only in chapters 23-24 and 37-38. The rest of the *Asclepius* contains little that might be associated with magic or idolatry.

² All depends, of course, on one's definition of magic. As an example of how difficult it is to distinguish between prayer and spell, see

for example the so-called *voces magicae* (strings of vowels and consonants) found in the *Papyri Magicae Graecae*, but also in the Hermetic *Discourse on the Eight and the Ninth* (Nag Hammadi VI,6), which describes a ceremonial process of mystical rebirth (Mahé 1997).

³ Latin orig.: Nock & Festugière 1946; engl. transl.: Copenhaver 1992.

⁴ Cf. the Greek Nag Hammadi parallel (*infra*).

⁵ Cf. Zosimus, *The Final Quittance* [*hè teleutaia apoche*] (see re-ed. in Festugière 1944 I, app. I): 'Do not roam about searching for God; but sit calmly at home, and God, who is everywhere, and not confined in the smallest place like the daemons, will come to you' (quoted according to Fowden 1986, 122). God 'lacks nothing' because he is everywhere and nowhere [Zosimus, *loc.cit.*], cf. for example *Corpus Hermeticum* XI, 20-22; but the daemons lack their freedom of movement, which is why they need to be kept happy by 'sacrifices, hymns, songs of praise'. Cf. also Iamblichus, *Myst. V*, 14: 'to offer material sacrifices to immaterial gods is inappropriate, but very suitable to all material gods' (quoted according to Fowden 1992, 143 nt 2). On the continuities between hermetism and Iamblichean theurgy, see *infra*.

⁶ Luck (1989, 187-188) infers an ascetic discipline of prolonged silence, the use of material things such as herbs and stones, as well as spoken or written words, the use of magic tools such as the "bull-roarer" and in

some cases psychedelic drugs (192-194). He also mentions the enigmatic reference to the "understanding warmed by fire", which would enable the theurgist to 'understand all of theology in a flash'. I wonder about the similarities with the ritual practice described by the 13th-century Jewish mystic Abraham Abulafia. The approach towards the 'influx of divine power' into the mystic, which permits him an understanding beyond verbal expression, seems

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to have been accompanied by a sensation of warmth in the heart (see Scholem 1946, 136; Idel 1988, 39).

⁷ 'Theurgic union is attained only by the perfective operation of unspeakable acts correctly performed, acts which are beyond all understanding, and by the power of the unutterable symbols intelligible only to the gods' (Iamblichus, *Myst.* 2,11; cf. Luck 1989, 186).

⁸ See Shaw 1985, 3: 'It is a curious fact that Neoplatonism today is identified with Plotinus and an intellectual mysticism which denied formal religious worship, for in the history of the tradition Plotinus stands nearly alone in this attitude. In fact, Neoplatonism was far more influenced by the Syrian Iamblichus and his theurgical mysticism than by Plotinus'. And even Plotinus may not have been wholly averse towards theurgy. At least one well-known anecdote, related by Porphyry (*Vita Plotini*, ch. 10), suggests that

he was perfectly willing to participate in a theurgic ritual (see discussion in Luck 1989, 207-208).

⁹ One good example would be Carlo Ginzburg's great study of the Witches' Sabbath (Ginzburg 1991).

¹⁰ With respect to Ficino's magic, this point has been emphasized in the important recent study of Tomlinson (1993, ch. 5), who makes good use of the relevant anthropological literature. I prefer the term "soul flight" over Tomlinson's "soul loss". The latter term might suggest that the experience is somehow negative (i.e., something is "lost"), whereas in fact it is usually evaluated positively.

¹¹ This combination can frequently be encountered in reports of contemporary "channeling" mediums in the context of the New Age movement (Hanegraaff 1996, ch. 1).

¹² Agrippa also refers to Augustine's reference to the *Asclepius*, but without mentioning that this authority in fact condemns the practice.

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Cf also *Occ.Phil.* III, 58, which quotes Hermes' opinion that it is a sacrilege to approach the one God in the manner appropriate to the terrestrial gods.

¹³ Illud autem scias nihil operari imagines

eiusmodi, nisi vivificentur ita quod ipsis aut naturalis aut coelestis aut heroica aut animastica aut daemoniaca vel angelica virtus insit aut adsistat. At quis modo animam dabit imagini et vivificabit lapidem aut metallum aut lignum aut ceram atque "ex lapidibus suscitabit filios Abrahae"? Certe non penetrat hoc arcanum ad artificem durae cervicis nec dare poterit illa qui non habet: habet autem nemo, nisi qui iam cohibitis elementis, victa natura, superatis coelis, progressus angelos, ad ipsum Archetypum usque trascendit, cuius tunc cooperato effectus potest omnia, sicut de hoc dicemus in sequentibus (ed. Perrone Compagni, 373).

¹⁴ Notice, however, that VCC is not explicitly presented as a book on magic. It is the third and final volume of a treatise on the health of intellectuals, entitled *De Vita*.

¹⁵ Boer's translation has an attractive poetic charm but his accuracy has been criticized (Allen 1982). The edition by Kaske & Clark is vastly superior for scholarly purposes.

¹⁶ Transl. Armstrong 1984. About the establishment of this passage as the basis for *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda*, see the discussion by Kaske & Clark in their edition, p. 25ff; cf. Copenhaver 1986, 352-353.

¹⁷ Sed cur magum putamus amorem? Quia tota vis magicae in amore consistit. Magicae opus est, attractio rei unius ab alia.

¹⁸ See the chapter on "Magic and love" in the invaluable study by Alain Godet (1982),

where we read that 'these actions [of magical fascination] take place, exactly as with love, through the belly; their center is not the divine 'anima rationalis' but the 'spiritus animalis', which is understood to be animal-like, resp. the 'anima sensitiva' ... And just like the lover expresses his feelings with a glowing gaze and passionate words, just so the sorcerer uses sweet words ..., and from his eyes flow the disastrous particles or rays, with the help of

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which he knows how to subject the weaker mind to his power'. On neoplatonic concepts of "love" and "sympathy" in the context of Ficino's magic, cf. especially Beierwaltes 1978 and Müller-Jahncke 1979, 32ff.

¹⁹ Ipse [= spiritus] vero est corpus tenuissimum, quasi non corpus et quasi iam anima, item quasi non anima et quasi iam corpus.

²⁰ Cf. Walker 1958, 51: 'It is clear that Ficino is strongly attracted by this kind of magic or theurgy, that he considers it valuable, and also it is clear that he is aware that it is dangerous'.

²¹ Unam profecto noxiamque Venus vobis indidit voluptatem, qua noceret quidem vobis, prodesset vero futuris, exhauriens paulatim vos per latentem quandam quasi fistulam, aliudque vestris liquoribus implens atque procreans, vos tandem quasi vetustum quoddam spoliolum cicadarum iam

exhaustum humi relinquens, cicadae interim teneriori prospiciens.

²² ego vero beneficio patris atque fratris quinque promitto vobis, quinque praesto puras, perpetuas, salutare, quarum infima est in olfactu, superior in auditu, sublimior in aspectu, eminentior in imaginatione, in ratione excelsior atque divinior.

²³ For terminological distinctions between various types of astrology, see Kaske & Clark 1989, 32-38. Elective astrology is a matter of 'timing one's activities to coincide with the predicted dominance of favorable stars' (o.c., 37).

²⁴ Walker translates *aries* as goat, but "ram" is certainly more appropriate both literally and astrologically. Ficino mentions aries once (VCC 1.103), in a list of solarian animals. The cock (*gallus*) is mentioned far more often in the same capacity: VCC 1.103; 13.67; 14.12, 25, 26, 28; 15.74, 76; 18.63.

²⁵ The raven was considered a solarian animal (Ficino VCC 14, 25).

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Diacceto's description of how to use the sun for curing diseases literally repeats Ficino (VCC 18, 52-54): 'For curing diseases they fashioned an image of the Sun in gold, in his hour, when the first face of Leo was ascending with him: a king on a throne in a yellow garment and a raven and the form of the Sun'. Ficino, in turn, is dependent on the

Picatrix (Kaske & Clark 1989, 448 nt 10).

²⁶ Like Ficino, Diaceto refers to the planets as "gods" (Walker 1958, 32).

²⁷ See the discussions in Tomlinson 1993 (partly with reference to Allen and Couliano), esp. 125-127.

²⁸ See esp. Walker 1958, 105: 'His [i.e., Ficino's] magic is eminently private, individual and subjective, and hence is nearer to being a religion than a bogus science'. This seems to reflect the Frazerian view of "magic" as pseudo-science, but it remains unclear why the 'private, individual and subjective' nature of a ritual would make it into "religion" (in Durkheimian terms, it would rather be a reason to speak of magic). On p. 83, we read that 'The production of effects by applied psychology or magic differs from many religious practices only in that no divine cause is assumed' (with a note reference to William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*). Here, magic seems to be used as a synonym for applied psychology rather than pseudo-science; and religion is characterized merely by doctrinal opinions about the causality involved.

²⁹ The two fundamental discussions remain Kristeller 1938 & 1960.

³⁰ Published by Brini 1955. On the attribution to Lazzarelli, see Kristeller 1938, 230-231. On the connections between Lazzarelli and Correggio, see Kristeller 1938, 1956a, 1960.

³¹ Mercurius is a common pseudonym for Hermes, and the *Corpus Hermeticum* translated by Ficino was known as the *Pimander* (referring to the first text of the collection, "Poimandres").

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³² See esp. his second "preface" addressed to Correggio, published in Kristeller 1938, 244-245.

³³ I.e., Giovanni Pontano. This second pupil is suppressed in the version of the *Crater Hermetis* published by Lefèvre d'Étaples in 1505, and translated into French by M. Gabriel du Preau in 1549. The redactor of the 1505 publication adapted the text in other respects as well, apparently concerned to minimize any too strict connection between Christianity and Hermetism (Moreschini 1985, 200). Moreschini's modern edition of the *Crater* is based upon the manuscript version (XIII AA 34) in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Naples, which therefore reflects Lazzarelli's original intention. Here I foreshadow the annotated English translation of Lazzarelli's Hermetic writings, currently in preparation (Bouthoorn & Hanegraaff forthcoming).

³⁴ Ipse qui in Hermetis mente Pimander erat, in me Christus Iesus incolatum facere dignatus est.

³⁵ Cf. Lazzarelli, IInd Preface (addressed to Correggio), in: Kristeller 1938, 244-245.

³⁶ Notice that Lazzarelli speaks of 'naturam Dei', instead of 'divinam naturam' (*Asclepius* 37).

³⁷ Cf. *Asclepius* 23: 'deorum genus omnium confessione manifestum est de mundissima parte naturae esse prognatum signaque eorum sola quasi capita pro omnibus esse' (Nock & Festugière [1946] comment that 'signa' means "astral forms", which are like heads without body, while the statues of gods (species deorum) fabricated by man depict the whole body).

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³⁸ Haec certe novitatum novitas nova, / et mirabilibusmaius id omnibus, / naturam quia homo iam reperit Dei / atque ipsam sapiens facit. // Nam sicut Dominus vel genitor Deus / caelestes generans procreat angelos, / qui rerum species, qui capita omnium / exemplaria primaque: // divas sic animas verus homo facit, / quod terrae vocitat turba vetus deos, / qui gaudent homini vivere proximos, / laetanturque hominis bono. NB: line four is difficult to translate (lit.: and knowing [this], makes it [i.e., the nature of God]).

³⁹ Genesis 25, 5-6.

⁴⁰ Super eo enim verbo in Geneseos libro: "deditque Habraamus cuncta quae possederat Isaaco, filiis autem concubinarum largitus est munera", sic Cabalistae enarrant quia quae data sunt concubinarum filiis fuerunt Scemoth Sceltoma, id est nomina

immunditiae, ars videlicet magica. Quae autem data sunt Isaaco fuerunt quaedam divina secreta, quae ... Cabalam vocant. Quod nomen nostro tempore apud quosdam cognitum esse coepit. Eius tamen operatio, si unum tantum excipio, omnes penitus latet. NB: It has sometimes been assumed that the 'one person' who knows the working of Kabbalah must have been the founder of Christian kabbalah Pico della Mirandola (Secret 1964, 74, who rejects the suggestion because the chronology does not fit, but does not propose an alternative). To me, it seems obvious that Lazzarelli must have in mind his master Giovanni da Correggio.

⁴¹ Iam vero materia ipsa concentus purior est admodum coeloque similior quam materia medicinae. Est enim aer et hic quidem calens sive tepens, spirans adhuc et quodammodo vivens, suis quibusdam articulis artubusque compositus sicut animal, nec solum motum ferens affectumque praeferens, verum etiam significatum afferens quasi mentem, ut animal quoddam aereum et rationale quodammodo dici possit.

⁴² On this whole subject, see the balanced discussion in Tomlinson 1993, ch. 4.

⁴³ [Praeterea] cum homo concipit rem aliquam corpoream ymaginatione., illa res recipit actualem existentiam secundum speciem in spiritu ymaginario (Al-Kindi, *De Radiis*, cap. V; ed. d'Alverny & Hudry, p. 231). Translation following Tomlinson (1993, 122); cf. the less precise translation in Couliano 1987, 121.

⁴⁴ Fabio Paolini, *Hebdomades* (1589): 'Some people assert that the feelings and conceptions of our souls can by the force of the imagination be rendered volatile and corporeal, so that, in accordance with their quality, they can be carried up to certain stars and planets ... and ... will come down again to us and will obey us in whatever we want' (quoted according to Walker 1958, 136). Hayim Vital (1543-1620), *Concerning the Revolution of Souls*: 'If a just and pious man applies himself to the law and prays with attention, from these utterances going forth from his mouth, angels and sacred spirits will be created, who will always last and persist' (quoted according to Coudert 1978, 72). In contemporary occultist magic, there exists the belief 'that one can create an entity on the astral plane, by envisioning it; and then, through ritual, sacrifice, prayer, and other actions, store astral force within the entity, for later magical use' (Merkur 1998).

⁴⁵ It seems more than accidental that Lazzarelli introduces his mystery of soul-making as the 'newest novelty of novelties and a greater miracle than all others', whereas the *Asclepius* merely speaks of 'the wonderment of all wonders'. Lazzarelli's Christian hermeticism is *new* and without precedent, and superior even to the greatest wonder of the ancients.

⁴⁶ Idel 1988a, 68. The first to point this out was Gershom Scholem, in his *Hebrew Elements of the Cabala and Its Symbolism*

(Jerusalem 1976). Unfortunately, the discussion of Lazzarelli found there is omitted in the English version (Scholem 1965).

⁴⁷ I am not convinced by Idel's suggestions as to the relevance to Lazzarelli of the specifically magical part of the golem technique (see Idel 1988a, 68-69).

⁴⁸ Genesis 12:5. On Jewish-esoteric interpretations of this enigmatic verse, see Scholem 1965, 170ff.

⁴⁹ Quoted according to Idel 1988a, 70.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Scholem 1965, 188. On such contrasts between the golem and the golden calf, interpreted as a magically animated statue, see Scholem's reference to the anonymous *Book of Life* (13th cent.) (Scholem 1965, 183).