Doctoral Dissertation

OBTINERE MENTEM DIVINAM: THE SPIRITUAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

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At caelum certe patet; ibimus illac

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VIII, 186

MANIBVS PARENTVM ET FRATRIS

PREFACE

After a short journey from Cologne to Bonn, Ruprecht, a young and zealous student of the occult, pays a visit to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, a famous occultist, to inquire from him about the deeper secrets of magic. Ruprecht manages to find his place of abode—a spacious but not too luxurious house in which Agrippa lives immersed in his arcane sciences with a handful of disciples—and persuades these to let him approach the great master. Agrippa's students warn him that the master has become introverted and whimsical, sometimes not leaving his study for days and expecting his food and beverage to be left for him in an adjacent room. Ruprecht boldly accepts the risk and, upon Agrippa's call, enters his room.

The magician's study at first reminds the young man of a monastic library: dim, crowded with dusty bookshelves, books and folders, strange instruments and stuffed animals, it smells like decay. Hidden behind a massive desk, stooped in his chair, one of the greatest occultists of Europe appears as a small, thin man with something depreciating and squeamish in his facial expression. He is not yet old, but his lips are droopy and his eyes tired. After only a few minutes of tense conversation Ruprecht realizes that he is talking to an angry, bitter, nervous man who casts flames of disappointment in all directions. Well into his mature age, he has not received a deserved recognition as a religious philosopher and reformer but is instead pursued by his creditors, condemned by university theologians, ridiculed by hypocrites of all sorts.

Somewhat taken aback, Ruprecht inquires about the secret details of operative magic related to summoning demons but receives a fierce reply. You have completely misunderstood magic, says Agrippa in disdain. Magic is the highest form of religion, and the true magician is a hierophant and prophet. The greatest magicians were the Sibyl, who foretold the coming of Christ, and those three

kings who visited the infant Jesus on the night of his birth. Ruprecht then confronts him with the fact that Agrippa himself wrote—and took trouble to publish—a long treatise on operative magic with detailed discussions on summoning demons, which makes Agrippa's recantation appearing in the preface of that work dubious and unconvincing. The master is now even angrier and responds that he cannot get into the real reasons for publishing his *De occulta philosophia* for he is bound by a sacred oath. However, he goes on to explain that there are two kinds of knowledge or science: theoretical knowledge based on ratiocination and an inner knowledge of the divine, "which uplifts us to the cognition of the essence and God Himself." There is one true magic: that by which our soul can ascend to the realm of the divine. Everything else is an idle superstition. In the end, Ruprecht is utterly confused and leaves Bonn without the desired answers, but with a strong impression that Cornelius Agrippa is a solitary, disappointed man on the verge of defeat.

This brief episode from the novel *Ognennyi angel* [The Fiery Angel] by a Russian writer Valery Bryusov (1873–1924) paints a stunning image of the famous German humanist and occultist. Bryusov's novel has been generally praised for his meticulous research and thorough reconstruction of the social and spiritual atmosphere of sixteenth-century Germany, but his depiction of Agrippa reveals a fascinating insight into some of the main problems related to this Faustian icon of Western culture. Instead of a formidable conjurer we see a troubled man torn apart by his doubts and failures, whose magnificent cathedral of ideas has almost collapsed. We also see a man whose understanding of magic is deeply permeated by his religious sentiments.

Not only did Bryusov—unlike many scholars of his time such as Lynn Thorndike—recognize in Agrippa a figure of intellectual gravity and integrity, but he also ingeniously anticipated some of the future (and even present-day) scholarly debates related to the German humanist: among others, the question of his recantation, the problem of the relationship between magic and religion, the dichotomy

of *gnosis* and *episteme*.

My own encounter with Cornelius Agrippa was far less dramatic than Ruprecht's, but from the outset my impression of his work very much corresponded to Bryusov's depiction. I could sense that Agrippa was not merely a Thorndakean "trifler," a shallow-minded quack who rode on the wave of the early modern "new age." Moreover, it was evident to me that the core of Agrippa's magical theory carried a strong religious component, albeit one hardly compatible with the Christian benchmarks of his time. In fact, I found studying his heterodox frame of mind highly relevant in the comparative perspective of our own era, marked by the phenomena of religious pluralism and hybrid identities. Thus, I set out to examine Agrippa's ideas of spiritual ascension in the context of his magical theory. The result was my MA thesis (Central European University, Budapest, 2007), which only partly answered my initial research question, namely, *whether the Agrippan magus was indeed a pious and wise hierophant, as Bryusov's character presented him, or a sacrilegious intruder infected by the Pelagian heresy, as the Christian theologians saw him*. The answer is simple: for Agrippa and his soulmates, the first held true; for the orthodox theologians of his time, it was the second. There exists no "indeed" in this question. *Tertium non datur*. The sides had been picked ever since the time of Simon Magus and the apostle Peter, and one is only left to inquire (and wonder) about the deeper causes of this ancient rift between the theology of mercy and theology of personal initiative.

This fundamental problem is what I revisit in my PhD dissertation through the work of Cornelius Agrippa, a bold syncretist who did not think it impious to pave his way back to God with his own effort. As the following pages will show, I approach the problem by scrutinizing Agrippa's views on man and his nature, which I consider one of the most important nodal points between Agrippa's understanding of piety and his theory of magic. Thus, my dissertation not only marks a further development of the ideas discussed in my MA thesis, but is also an endeavor to tackle the old problems

in an entirely new perspective.

It was a long and exhausting intellectual journey that certainly could not have been accomplished without the guidance and help of others. It was my main guide, Professor György E. Szőnyi, who “initiated” me into the bona fide academic studies of Western esotericism and whose expert and cordial support has been crucial in every stage of the process. Our intellectual compatibility and an enduring friendship that developed over the years are built deeply into this work. My other supervisor, Professor György Geréby, has made me more aware of the various theological and philosophical intricacies related to my topic. His ideas in this field have had a formative impact on my work.

I am grateful beyond expression to the Medieval Studies Department of Central European University and all its teachers and staff not only for providing me with a pleasurable academic shelter for my research, but also for enabling me to spend several amazing years in Budapest, my second home. My special thanks go to Professors Matthias Riedl and Gábor Klaniczay for their constructive suggestions and remarks at different stages of my research. Moreover, if it had not been for the warmest support and tender encouragement from Professor Alice Choyke and the PhD Program Coordinator Csilla Dobos, I probably would not be where I am today. Simple human empathy transcends all intellectual considerations and I was fortunate enough to receive it when I needed it most.

At the initial phase of my research Professors Irena Backus (University of Geneva), Marc van der Poel (Radboud University, Nijmegen), and Christopher I. Lehrich (Boston University) kindly helped me to clarify and refocus my dissertation topic and formulate my main research questions with more precision and feasibility. At several occasions Professors Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Peter J. Forshaw (University of Amsterdam) fostered my work through their valuable insights.

My dear friends Irina Savinetskaya and Joseph B. Murray have helped in more ways than I can think of: from their constant and fervent support to their help with editing and proofreading, they have added their own *sine qua non* to my work. As a result of our thought-provoking discussions, I was able to gradually refine my ideas and come to the point of expressing them more resolutely. I remain profoundly indebted to Ira and Joe.

Other friends too have contributed to my work in various ways. Vladimir Živanović (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts) was the one who introduced me to Agrippa and his work and provided me with my first copy of *The Occult Philosophy*. Milosav Vešović (Belgrade Faculty of Theology) helped me find my way through the complexities of present-day scholarship on the Pauline anthropology. Numerous discussions with my knowledgeable friend and colleague Luka Špoljarić (University of Zagreb) helped me develop a better understanding of the perplexing world of Renaissance humanism. The same goes for Nemanja Radulović (University of Belgrade), who has made me more sensitive to the various methodological issues related to the academic studies of esotericism in general. I am glad to mention here some other friends whose encouragement has been important to me all along the way: Petar Vujošević, Mircea Graţian Duluş, Marijana Vuković, Carl Otto Christensen, Dora Ivanišević, László Ferenczi. My sincere thanks go to all of them.

Finally, none of this would be possible without the selfless support and love of my wife Milena and my daughter Marija. I can only hope to become able to reciprocate with the same degree of affection and kindness.

In the course of writing this dissertation I lost my beloved brother David and mother Ljiljana. This work is dedicated to them, as well as to my father Jovan. I pray that they have actually achieved the state of heavenly bliss that scholars so eagerly attempt to analyze and define.

Belgrade, Serbia, October 15, 2017

INTRODUCTION

CORNELIUS AGRIPPA THROUGH ANTHROPOLOGICAL GLASSES

The "Agrippan question": the magus versus the Christian?

Against the confusing background of the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Renaissance, the life and thought of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535) appear as exemplary of various intellectual currents and tendencies of the time. This German occultist, philosopher, and faithful initiate in the *bonae litterae* was one of the numerous Renaissance thinkers who aspired to build grand syntheses of various spiritual traditions aimed at spiritual renewal of a Christianity faced with a major crisis. However, due to the vast diversity of influences that shaped his literary output and the striking incongruity of his philosophical attitudes, Agrippa's case is in many respects exceptional and worth additional scholarly attention. In this work I put forward the thesis that Agrippa's anthropology, especially as delineated in his *De occulta philosophia*, contains his attempted "reconstruction" of the "original" Christianity that he believed was lost or on the brink of destruction in his own time. This "reconstruction" was largely based on his Christian appropriation of the Neoplatonic and Hermetic views on the nature of man.

What constitutes the core of what I provisionally term the "Agrippan question" is an apparent inability of the scholars dealing with Agrippa to unequivocally classify his thoughts within this or that "school" or tradition. He eludes all such attempts by virtue of being simultaneously positioned in different, often mutually conflicting, intellectual paradigms. Once twentieth-century scholarship on Agrippa left behind earlier prejudices concerning the "lack of seriousness" of the German humanist and acknowledged in him a certain autonomy and gravity of thought, different ways to interpreting his work were paved, only to open a range of questions, many of which still remain tempting.

Agrippa von Nettesheim was one of the most important representatives of that broad fifteenth-to-sixteenth century intellectual and philosophical current often termed Renaissance Hermeticism. This diffuse, syncretistic movement[1] was grounded in several crucial philological, historical, and cultural factors: the emergence of medieval Arab scholarship in the Latin West, which paved the way for the gradual and limited legitimation of "magic" (mostly in the form of *magia naturalis*); the rediscovery of Plato, the Neoplatonists and the late antique Hermetic writings, as well as the appearance of their Latin translations; the consequent reevaluation and appropriation of various non-Christian esoteric teachings and practices; finally, a new religious and intellectual climate marked by the emergence of various reform ideas and movements in the atmosphere of a stunning crisis of the Roman Church. Aligning himself with his immediate forerunners, Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola from the so-called Florentine Academy,[2] and with his elder contemporaries, Johann Reuchlin, abbot Johann Trithemius, and Lodovico Lazzarelli—to mention but a few—Agrippa shaped his philosophy as a curious mixture of various spiritual traditions designed for one single purpose: to "purify" and reform "corrupt" medieval magic and thereby offer a new, powerful philosophical synthesis to the crisis-stricken Christianity.[3] The main result of this program was his remarkable magical summa *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (Three books of occult philosophy), an encyclopedia of practically all available theoretical knowledge on occultism of the time, interpreted within a philosophical framework usually defined in the relevant scholarship as Neoplatonic. In historical works Agrippa himself is often mentioned as one of the great "Renaissance magi," a term that implies a degree of practice in addition

[1] By this word I do not have in mind a singular, concrete, and readily definable social group in the sense of the "Hermetic movement" postulated by Frances A. Yates; see Christopher I. Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels. Cornelius Agrippa's Occult Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 13–18; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy. Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 327–34.

[2] For a critical assessment of the exact nature of Ficino's Academy see James Hankins, "The Myth of the Platonic Academy of Florence," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (1991): 429–75.

[3] This intention was explicitly expressed in the dedicatory letter of the twenty-three-year old Agrippa to Abbot Trithemius, in which his linking of magic with Christianity is evident; see Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, ed. V. Perrone Compagni (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 68–71. See also Perrone Compagni's "Introduction" to the same work, 15–16.

to the main business of theorizing.[4]

On the other hand, out of his numerous smaller works and sermons, as well as religious controversies he was involved in, yet another, more neglected image of Agrippa emerges, that of a devoted *miles Christi* under the influence of Desiderius Erasmus, John Colet, and to some extent Martin Luther and other Reformation thinkers. This strand of literary and spiritual influence goes beyond contemporary Biblical humanism, encompassing medieval thinkers such as Albert the Great and Nicolaus of Cusa, and extends as far back as the early Church Fathers and the Old and New Testaments. As for the Church Fathers, Agrippa was particularly influenced by the available contemporary interpretations of Augustine, Jerome, and Dionysius the Areopagite, and concerning the Biblical authorities, by those of St. Paul and St. John the Apostle.[5] This aspect of Agrippa's thought was marked by an emphasis on the *via negativa* of the Areopagite, the concept of *docta ignorantia* as taught by Nicolaus of Cusa, and the *sola fides* principle of his above-mentioned contemporaries. Agrippa's conviction that God can be reached only through pure faith and devotion to Christ consequently led him to a strong anti-scholastic position and to a denial of there being any epistemological value to any of the human sciences and disciplines, including all types of occultism. The ultimate result of such a train of thought was Agrippa's skeptical–devotional declamation *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium atque excellentia verbi Dei declamatio* (Declamation on the uncertainty and vanity of sciences and arts, and the excellence of the word of God, hereafter: *De*

[4] Among modern scholars already D. P. Walker referred to him as a "magician"; see D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic From Ficino to Campanella* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1958), 94. See also Lehrich, *Language of Demons and Angels*, 1, where he calls Agrippa "a great magician." Indeed, the German humanist did not hide his engagement in esoteric practices, e.g., when he spoke of his and Trithemius' experiments with telepathy: *Et ego id facere novi et saepius feci; novit idem etiam fecitque quondam abbas Tritemius* (Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia*, 97) — "and I myself know how to do it, and have often done it. The same also in time past the Abbot Tritenius [*sic*] both knew and did" (Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, trans. James Freake, ed. Donald Tyson [St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2000], 18).

[5] See Charles G. Nauert Jr., *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 40, 42, 64. Agrippa himself authored an incomplete commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul, which unfortunately did not survive to our day.

vanitate), a radical antipode to his magical summa that led some scholars to connect Agrippa with the tradition of Pyrrhonist skepticism and with Sextus Empiricus.[6]

Given that, more or less, all hypotheses of Agrippa's gradual "development" or "evolution" from one position to the other have been discarded or at least seriously questioned in present-day scholarship and that the problem remains highly relevant in our contemporary cultures marked by religious pluralism and various forms of heterodoxy, I intend to take up the "Agrippan question" once again, in those of its aspects that despite being potentially rewarding have not been given sufficient scholarly attention to this day.[7]

In addition to the old interpretive dilemma concerning Agrippa's "skepticism" versus his "credulity," there seems to be another, growing divergence in the scholarship dealing with the German humanist. It is based on the widespread perception of a sharp division between magic and Christian piety as the two undisputed pillars of Agrippa's thought. Some scholars choose to approach him mostly as a theoretician of magic, even though his works abound in theological thinking (whatever one might think of the depth and originality of this theology).[8] In a rather different manner, others tend to view

[6] The chief advocate of this thesis is Nauert, *Agrippa*, 140, 142, 297, 300. See also his important paper "Magic and Skepticism in Agrippa's Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 18, No. 2 (1957): 161–82, where he states: "In opposition to the orderly world view which the Thomists and the humanists shared, there arose a general skepticism concerning the power of the human mind to gain truth. This skepticism in turn produced two results, sometimes at odds but often found in the same person: unsystematic empiricism, which granted truth only to sensory knowledge, and occultism, which appealed rather to gnostic traditions of revealed truth" (quote on 165–66). In this regard see also George H. Daniels, Jr, "Knowledge and Faith in the Thought of Cornelius Agrippa," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, T. 26, No. 2 (1964): 326–40, for a discussion of Agrippa's "skepticism," where he demonstrates that this label hardly fits Agrippa in any of its possible meanings. He prefers to speak of Agrippa's empiricism, not skepticism. On this kind of combination of Platonism with empiricism see also Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought. The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanistic Strains* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 48–69.

[7] Whether they adhere to the idea of a "split" or an inherent "harmony" of Agrippa's positions, scholars generally no longer accept Nauert's paradigm of a gradual three-stage development of Agrippa's mind, from an initial "appeal to the wisdom of an occult Antiquity" to an utter disappointment with the powers of human reason and "a fideistic appeal to the Gospels as the only source of truth"; see Nauert, "Magic and Skepticism in Agrippa's Thought," 182. See also idem, *Agrippa*, 214, 220.

[8] Much in tune with D. P. Walker, this is how Agrippa has been viewed by scholars such as Michael E. Keefer and György E. Szőnyi. The latter sees Agrippa's work as implying "an affiliation between the sacred and the demonic" and thus subverting itself; György E. Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation Through Powerful Signs* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 130–31.

Agrippa in more religious (that is, Christian) terms and are apparently willing to downplay the esoteric component of his thought. This current of scholarship often puts significant emphasis on Agrippa's role as a humanist opposed to the social and doctrinal misdoings and moral degeneration of the Roman Church.[9] The former are inclined to see Agrippa's magical doctrines, to use D. P. Walker's words, as "obviously incompatible with Christianity,"[10] which is certainly not a novelty in scholarship. The latter, however, appear to be moving toward a curious "Christianization" of the German occultist, which is a new development. Such a dichotomy is due to a good reason: the problem has always been how to relate these two facets of Agrippa's thought, his openly heterodox magical beliefs and his seemingly orthodox creed. In a world of inherited cultural paradigms and doctrinal compartments there could be no such thing as a "pious Christian magician." It would seem that the image of Simon Magus, looming menacingly behind any such idea, set the ultimate criteria for distinguishing piety from impiety in the large part of the Western cultural and religious consciousness.[11] From various points of view, the "pious Christian magician" remains a contested notion. What might strike one in this oxymoron are not the common opposites of "Christian" and "magical," but rather the plurality of meanings that could be ascribed to the seemingly self-explanatory adjective "pious."

Anthropology as the crux of the problem

It is the vantage point of this thesis that the intricate relations and interactions between these two alleged opposites can best be examined by looking more deeply into Agrippa's peculiar anthropology as a meeting point between magic and theology. By "anthropology" I do not, of course, mean the

[9] In my view, Vittoria Perrone Compagni and Marc van der Poel are the most important present-day adherents to this line of approach. With her insistence on Agrippa's crypto-Protestantism, Paola Zambelli can be considered as belonging to the same camp (in the broadest sense of that word).
[10] Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 85.
[11] Perhaps one of the best expressions of this line of reasoning is Keefer's famous article "Agrippa's Dilemma: Hermetic 'Rebirth' and the Ambivalences of *De vanitate* and *De occulta philosophia*," *Rennaisance Quarterly* 41, No. 4 (1991): 614–53.

modern-day scientific discipline. Rather, I imply a complex set of beliefs, notions, and doctrines concerning issues such as the self, personhood, the body–soul dichotomy etc. that governed Agrippa's understanding of the phenomena he dealt with in his writings. Undoubtedly, these issues cannot be sharply separated from various other philosophical and theological concerns, but there are, I believe, enough reasons to treat them as a distinct discursive field.

This is by no means a novel perspective. Along the lines of the "man the operator" paradigm postulated by Frances A. Yates,[12] it was already Charles Nauert who in his magisterial biography of Agrippa emphasized the centrality of his anthropological views for a better understanding of his involvement in magic. It is worth quoting the following insightful remark by Nauert on this particular, intriguing aspect of Renaissance anthropocentrism:

> What really made Agrippa's world view magical, rather than merely another expression of the widely held Neoplatonic picture of a hierarchically ordered world, was the position he assigned to man. (...) Potentially, man was what he had been before the fall of Adam: under God, lord and master of Creation. This exaltation of man as the magus was a special form of the Renaissance tendency to glorify man. Hence the Agrippan picture of the universe assigned an important position to man as center of all being, link between the material and spiritual worlds, and master of all the forces of the created world.[13]

Although the existing interpretations of what exactly man's exaltation implies may vary to a considerable degree, Nauert's basic idea appears to be unequivocally accepted among the present-day scholars dealing with Renaissance esotericism and Agrippa in particular. Also, there seems to be a wide agreement concerning at least one fundamental aspect of this peculiar Renaissance exaltation, namely that it aimed at the restoration of man's original ontological status, or "the return to prelapsarian

[12] Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 144.
[13] Nauert, *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought*, 279. The term "exaltation," mentioned here fortuitously, has been made into one of the synonyms for "deification" and fully developed as a concept by György E. Szőnyi in his monograph on John Dee (see note 8).

perfection"[14]—a goal undoubtedly shared by many sincere adherents to mainstream Christianity too. Both ideas, that of a "prelapsarian perfection" and a "return" to it, revolve around and depend upon the various notions of man construed both by the Renaissance syncretists and orthodox Christians. In other words, it is precisely the Renaissance ideas of man's nature that determined the ways his exaltation was to be understood and, ultimately, sought for in one's *vita activa*. Various aspects of this problem have been dealt with by a number of Agrippan scholars, but usually only in passing and as an integral part of other problems. With my study I intend to offer a thorough, more systematic approach to Agrippa's anthropology.

I have already argued that the main driving force behind the "Christian magus" as perceived by Cornelius Agrippa is his desire for spiritual ascension or deification.[15] As such, this desire or urge decisively concentrates on man and his unique position (often termed *dignitas* by Renaissance authors), as programmatically delineated by Pico della Mirandola in his famous *Oratio de hominis dignitate*. Agrippa himself repeatedly stresses the importance of what he terms *hominis dignificatio* for his project of magical ascension.[16] Thus a detailed examination of Agrippa's views on man as a uniquely privileged creature in the universe might shed some additional light on this murky area of intermingled modes of human spirituality. It could also provide a more nuanced insight into Agrippa's understanding (or various *registers* of understanding) of categories such as "magic," "demonic," "orthodoxy," or, for

[14] Vittoria Perrone Compagni, "'Dispersa Intentio.' Alchemy, Magic and Scepticism in Agrippa," *Early Science and Medicine*, Vol. 5, No. 2, *Alchemy and Hermeticism* (2000): 160–77, quote on 166. Nauert, *Agrippa*, 126, speaks of "a mystical illumination of the soul" as the main emphasis in the *De Occulta Philosophia*.

[15] Noel Putnik, *The Pious Impiety of Agrippa's Magic: Two Conflicting Notions of Ascension in the Works of Cornelius Agrippa* (Saarbruücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010). The book is closely based on my MA thesis.

[16] See, for instance, Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia*, 406–8 (Book III, Chapter 3, titled *Quae dignificatio requiritur ut quis evadat in verum magum et mirandorum operatorem*—"What dignification is required that one may be a true magician and a worker of miracles"). This chapter clearly shows the importance of Agrippa's anthropological perspective for his entire magical program. While *dignitas* was perceived as an inborn capacity of the human being, *dignificatio* was a process aimed at awaking it.

that matter, "Christianity" itself.[17] When speaking of Cornelius Agrippa, these categories are often taken as self-explanatory, but it needs to be examined in what ways they correspond to the second-order terms articulated by various scholarly interpretations.

As will be demonstrated in my overview of the relevant scholarship, the hypotheses and scholarly positions concerning the "Agrippan question" are often based on—or at least heavily influenced by—the underlying assumption of *mutual exclusiveness* between the intellectual paradigms in question. In other words, they operate with the clearly distinct categories of "(Neo)Platonic," "Hermetic," "magical" (that is, "pagan" or "unorthodox") versus "Christian" and "orthodox." In their extreme, they presume a sharp incompatibility or even irreconcilable enmity between the spiritual traditions indicated or implied by these labels. Such position is aptly formulated by Wouter Hanegraaff's remark on E. D. Colberg's notion of "Platonisch-Hermetisches Christenthum": "[O]n closer scrutiny, we appear to be dealing with a very uneasy marriage (or, if one prefers, a series of only partly successful marriage attempts) between two strongly different, even logically incompatible intellectual paradigms or styles of thinking."[18]

It is certainly difficult to challenge claims such as this one. In the perspective of the firmly established intellectual, cultural, and societal categories in question it simply reflects a historical datum. The doctrinal consolidation of the Roman Church had been completed, with its main dogmas more or less firmly fixed and institutionalized, centuries before the appearance of the Renaissance

[17] Here one might call to mind the exceptionally useful analytical concept of "micro-Christendoms" introduced by Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 13–17, 355–79. Although not directly applicable in this context, it gives a hint of possible new ways of conceptualizing various "Christianities" or "Christian identities" in Agrippa's time.

[18] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 192. Hanegraaff actually speaks of a dichotomy between Platonism and Hermetism, but his remark might as well be applied to a more profound rift between the basic Neoplatonic and Hermetic notions of man on the one side and the Judeo-Christian on the other. A Lutheran theologian, Ehregott Daniel Colberg (1659–1698) wrote a polemical treatise titled *Das Platonisch-Hermetische Christenthum*, fiercely attacking all syncretistic theologies implied by the title. According to Hanegraaff, this work was the first to outline "a complete and internally consistent historiographical concept that connected everything nowadays studied under that rubric. (…) 'Platonic-Hermetic Christianity' emerged from Colberg's book as a specific religious domain with an identity of its own" (108).

syncretists. As one of the competitive modes of late antique spirituality, Hermetism had lost its main battles long before Agrippa and his peers dreamt of their grand syntheses. It would make no sense to argue that in some parallel universe or some sort of alternative history a "marriage" between Christianity and Hermetism would have been a happier story. On the other hand, such apodictic claims of incompatibility appear to be insufficient to fully account for syncretists like Agrippa, who—unlike, for instance, Georgios Gemistos Plethon—cherished fervent Christian convictions and did not even consider fully replacing them with "something better."[19] Should one then dismiss the problem of "Platonic-Hermetic Christianity" by simply concluding that these and numerous other adherents to heterodoxy were the victims of grave illusions concerning the prospects of their attempted syntheses? In a positivist, teleological scholarly perspective the answer would be yes. In the perspective of religious pluralism and hybrid identities that I propose to take, it is obviously no. Unhappy marriages often reveal more about people than the happy ones. After all, the main hermeneutic challenges lie not so much in evaluating the results of any attempted religious synthesis as they do in elucidating the impulses and motives behind it. In the case of Christian Neoplatonists, Christian Hermetists, Christian Kabbalists and the like, it all boils down to a simple but daunting question: What is it that makes a person experience what I term *the insufficiency of the Revelation*?[20] In other words, what makes one's religious experience "worn-out," devoid of its necessary *mysterium tremendum*? Finally, what is it that makes one feel entitled to or capable of "enriching" it?[21] And how far can one go in this process of

[19] Plethon (c. 1355–1452/1454) advocated the radical abandonment of Christianity and the return to the Greek Olympian gods interpreted through Zoroastrianism as a sort of new universal religion. His profound knowledge was appealing to the intellectuals of Florence, but his open anti-Christian sentiments eventually made him unfit for Ficino's project of re-establishing the *prisca theologia*; see John Monfasani, "Marsilio Ficino and the Plato–Aristotle Controversy," in: Michael J. B. Allen, Valery Rees, ed., *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002): 179–202; Niketas Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 163–326.

[20] The capitalized first letter restricts this term to Jesus Christ's revelation as narrated in the New Testament in contrast to any other notion or tradition of divine revelation.

[21] Two striking examples can illustrate my point. In his small treatise titled *Dehortatio gentilis theologiae* (A dissuasion against pagan theology) Agrippa speaks about cleaning up the pagan literature until it fits into Christian learning so that it

"enriching" and still consider oneself a true adherent to the same creed?[22] All these questions lead to the main goal of my thesis: to ascertain through the lenses of anthropology what kind of a Christian—or a Platonist, for that matter—Cornelius Agrippa was, at least based on the image he projected through his writings.

Demarcational boundaries and terminological considerations

Thus, along with asking the above-mentioned questions, I believe it is important to further clarify the interpretive categories one chooses to apply to the problem, as well as the very selection of these categories. In the case of Agrippa and his "split position," it above all means examining what the German humanist could have meant when he used labels such as *magus*, *Christianus* or *Platonicus*. At this point one might recall Paul Oskar Kristeller's insightful remark on the problem:

> Yet if we examine the actual ideas of those thinkers who have been called Platonists by themselves or by others, we do no only find, as might be expected, a series of different interpretations and reinterpretations of Plato's teachings and writings. We are also confronted with the puzzling fact that different Platonists have selected, emphasized, and developed different doctrines or passages from Plato's works. Hardly a single notion which we associate with Plato has been held by all Platonists.[23]

In Agrippa's case, what appears as a major problem is to discern to what extent the notion of split or crisis has been imposed upon him and his work by the various interpretive models and terms

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can "*enrich* the Church of God" (*ecclesiam Dei locupletare*); quoted and translated by Marc van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian and his Declamations* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 25. A second example: in his famous Kabbalistic conclusions Pico della Mirandola ascertains that "no science offers greater *assurance of Christ's divinity* than magic and the cabala" (*Nulla est scientia, quae nos magis certificet de diuinitate Christi, quam Magia & Cabala*); quoted and translated by Wayne Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance. A Study in Intellectual Patterns* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1972), 16.

[22] In this regard it is worth mentioning that Marc van der Poel speaks of "the uncertainties of the revelation" as Agrippa's main field of interest; see Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 264. According to Van der Poel, Agrippa "embraces a theology which confines itself to the study of those elements in Christian revelation which remain uncertain" (*ibid*.). In my opinion, "uncertainty" is an understatement in Agrippa's case; more on this in Chapter Five.

[23] Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 48. Of all Renaissance "Platonists," this pertains primarily to Marsilio Ficino, the main translator of Plato and antique Neoplatonists. As Carol Kaske and John Clark note, his repeated claims to be merely translating Plato and Platonists "is a complex one, in that, first, the line between commentaries and original works was blurred"—Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark, ed. and tr. (Tempe, AR: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998), 27.

scholars have applied. The problem can be approached in a variety of ways, but what I propose as the focal point in this work is the examination of Agrippa's anthropological concepts. Arguably, the human being is the crux of the author's interest in all his works, either as a dignified magician (in the *De occulta philosophia*), or as one who seeks various ways to know God (the *De triplici ratione*), or even one who sees only a single way to God (the *De vanitate*). It is always about what human beings can do or know or achieve in their spiritual quest. In other words, Agrippa's perspective, as befits a Renaissance humanist, is strongly anthropocentric, albeit in ways greatly different from how Jakob Burckhardt construed this notion.[24] One could even speculate that the two key words in Agrippa's opus, had he been able to coin second-order terms the way modern scholars do, would have been *ascension* and *epistemology*. Both are anthropocentric to the core.

As I already mentioned above, what I have in mind by Agrippa's "anthropological concepts" is a complex set of beliefs, notions, and doctrines concerning the self, personhood, man's potentials and natural propensities, his ontological status, as well as a whole range of questions pertaining to the relations between body and soul. *Who* or *what* is it that attains ascension, be it magical or spiritual?[25] Is ascension attained *in spiritu* or *in corpore*, during one's lifetime (*in statu viatoris*) or in the afterlife (*in patria*)?[26] What is the self and is it any different from the carrier(s) of the self? What is it that survives in the afterlife and is redeemed or condemned (if at all) in the *eschaton*, and what is the role of temporality in relation to man's ontological position? In my opinion, these issues form the core of all

[24] Agrippa's pronounced anthropocentrism and his personal record of anti-institutional attitudes could indeed be seen as exemplary of the Burckhardtian notion of individualism. However, on Burckhardt's construct of "Renaissance individualism" and the supposed emergence of what he termed *geistiges Individuum* see John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 4–7. In contrast to Burckhardt's idealized image of the "Renaissance man," Martin points out that "new interpretations of the Renaissance 'self' … have begun to see the Renaissance individual not as an autonomous agent or a willful protagonist … but rather as the harbinger of the postmodern ego: fragmented, divided" (5). Agrippa's case seems to fit this perspective rather well.

[25] For an examination of the similarities and differences between these two modes of ascension see my work, Putnik, *The Pious Impiety, passim*.

[26] Or, to use I. P. Culianu's terminology, is it cathartic or eschatological? See Ioan Petru Culianu, *Psychanodia I* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 10–15.

Agrippa's "magical" and "Christian" convictions alike and can be regarded as the nexus between these two facets of his thought. I also emphasize that by "Agrippa's anthropology" I hypothesize only one subtype of what might be provisionally termed the spiritual anthropology of Renaissance syncretists.[27]

Certainly, such a complex topic requires a cross-disciplinary approach marked by a considerable degree of methodological pluralism. However, my initial approach is decidedly philological and historiographical. I hold that a careful philological examination and historical contextualization of the terms and concepts related to Agrippa's anthropology should be the basis for any further interpretations that fall within the broader boundaries of intellectual history or the history of ideas. Thus, a textual and semantic analysis—which is practically inseparable from what is nowadays known as discourse analysis—lies at the heart of my thesis. To certain limited extent I support my philological research with various analytical tools offered by literary theory to examine the complex processes of philosophical and theological re-contextualization and appropriation which Agrippa employed while building his synthesis. In other words, I scrutinize the ways Agrippa *read* his sources and, consequently, the ways he utilized them in his own writing. Such an approach should enable a better assessment of Agrippa's referencing and rhetorical strategies, which were of crucial importance in his attempts at making Hermes Trismegistos and Jesus Christ theologically compatible, or at least not openly inimical.

However, there still needs to be determined a conceptual umbrella, a scholarly field both broad enough and specialized enough to encompass different methodological approaches to Agrippa and unify them in their ultimate purpose. I believe that a convenient overarching disciplinal area in this

[27] As other modes of Renaissance "spiritual anthropology" I can mention Marsilio Ficino's emphasis on the immortal soul as discussed in his *Theologia Platonica* or Lodovico Lazzarelli's doctrine of spiritual regeneration delineated in his *Crater Hermetis*. These works will be considered in the course of my analysis. Although the classical, systematic "source-hunt" is not the purpose of this work, pointing to numerous conceptual ties that bind Agrippa with various other authors is an integral part of my examination. In any case, this territory has already been extensively charted: see, for instance, Nauert, *Agrippa*, 122–27, or Perrone Compagni's annotations to her critical edition of the *De occulta philosophia*.

sense can be the academic study of Western esotericism as a newly developed branch of religious studies. The comprehensive character of this nascent academic field has been formulated by Wouter Hanegraaff in the following way:

> From a strictly historical perspective, Western esotericism is used as a container concept encompassing a complex of interrelated currents and traditions from the early modern period up to the present day, the historical origin and foundation of which lies in the syncretistic phenomenon of Renaissance 'hermeticism'. (…) When [scholars] refer to their domain of study by the term "esotericism" they do not mean some kind of universal and trans-historical *sui generis* phenomenon (analogous to the "sacred" in religious studies), but a certain number of historical currents and traditions in western culture that are available for study regardless of how they are valuated.[28]

In what sense can one label Cornelius Agrippa as an *esoteric* writer? I introduce this term aware of the fact that it carries different meanings in different contexts and tends to be easily misunderstood or even rejected in academia.[29] Wouter Hanegraaff distinguishes between two aspects of "esotericism" as a scholarly, second-order term, defining them as a typological and a historical construct.[30] As such, this term can be usefully applied to Agrippa's work in both senses:

1) *As a typological construct*, since Agrippa explicitly associates his teachings with the notion of "secrecy" and considers them as a "certain kind of salvific knowledge [reserved] for a selected elite of initiated disciples;"[31] also, since he explicitly separates "inner mysteries of religion" from their

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[28] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Some Remarks on the Study of Western Esotericism," *Theosophical History*, Vol. VII, 6 (April 1999), 223–24; 225. On the other hand, Christopher Lehrich views this new academic field as an unnecessary attempt to defend studies of magic, since by constructing a narrowly delimited discipline scholars tend to "shut off collaboration and criticism from the 'outside'": see Christopher I. Lehrich, *The Occult Mind. Magic in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), xiv. Aware of this criticism, I will explain why I think the framework of this new discipline is applicable to and useful for the present study of Cornelius Agrippa.

[29] Stephen Clucas, for instance, calls for the outright rejection of the term "esotericism" viewing it as anachronic and misleadingly ahistorical; see Clucas, "*John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs* by György E. Szőnyi" (review), *Isis*, Vol. 99, No. 4 (December 2008): 830–31. This is a surprisingly flawed argument: modern scholarship is replete with second-order terms, which are almost inevitably anachronic. Even the substantive "occultism" originated as a neologism only in the nineteenth century. Christopher Lehrich too seems reluctant towards the use of the term "esotericism" (Lehrich, *The Language of Angels and Demons*, 159–64), but his reluctance is based on Antoine Faivre's by now largely discarded notion of it and he does not reject the term itself.

[30] Wouter J. Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006), 337–39.

[31] *Ibid*., 337. The most well-known examples are Agrippa's letter (*Epist*. III, 56, *Opera*, 759–60) in which he speaks of a "secret key" to knowledge, and Trithemius' advice to Agrippa to "communicate vulgar things to vulgar friends, but higher and more arcane matters to higher and secret friends only" (*Epist*. I, 24, *Opera*, 623).

"external manifestations";[32]

2) *As a historical construct*, since Agrippa's teachings, comprising the main elements of Neoplatonism, Hermetism, and Christian Kabbalah, clearly belong to "specific currents in Western culture that display certain similarities and are historically related."[33]

Given the specific features of esotericism and its past academic treatment (or, rather, the lack of treatment) as "rejected knowledge," it has been recognized by a number of scholars that this peculiar and not easily definable field requires a specialized cross-disciplinary approach. Thanks to the invaluable efforts of Thorndike, Walker, Yates, Zambelli, and many other scholars up to the present day, such an approach has been developed in various directions over the last several decades. Speaking of this new field that connects numerous disciplines and fills in a large gap in the religious and intellectual history of the West, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke formulates its purpose and scope in the following way:

> Far from treating esotericism as a "rejected form of knowledge," specialist scholars of the subject seek instead to distinguish the intrinsic philosophical and religious characteristics that attend esoteric spirituality. They are also concerned to document the history of esotericism as a particular form of spirituality, which has characterized Western thought in various schools and movements from late antiquity through the Renaissance and Reformation and into the present. Through such a historical approach, it is possible to examine the cultural and social circumstances that favour the emergence of esotericism as a world-view.[34]

If his emphasis on "the intrinsic characteristics" and "a particular form of spirituality" are taken with some caution, Goodrick-Clarke's formulation applies in Agrippa's case too. "Magic" in Agrippa is a blanket-term denoting a wide range of cultural, intellectual, and religious phenomena that do not

[32] Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 337. Agrippa views religion in whole as "a certain discipline of *external* holy things and ceremonies by which we are admonished of internal and spiritual things" (*De occulta philosophia* III, 4). See also *De vanitate*, Ch. 60, where Agrippa extols "inwardness in religion" as opposed to "external ceremonies." In this regard see also Nauert, *Agrippa*, 181–82.

[33] Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 337. This is the point of agreement among all the scholars dealing with Agrippa and needs no specific examples.

[34] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions. A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

always have the same characteristics, scope or purpose. Thus, attempts to define Agrippan magic as such might look like fishing out small fish by throwing a net with wide meshes. At least to some extent, introducing another term would make it easier to cope with this old scholarly conundrum.[35]

But what about the term "occultism"? If Agrippa calls his philosophy "occult" and not "esoteric," what is the need for the latter at all? One might argue that by introducing a term for something that already has one I neglect the principle of Occam's razor. And indeed, the term "esotericism" is not necessary, but it is useful. There are several points to be made in this regard.

First, "esotericism" is no more anachronic than "occultism" since both nouns were coined in the nineteenth century.[36] Moreover, in its current scholarly usage, "occultism" is mostly used to refer "specifically to 19th-century developments within the general history of Western esotericism, as well as their derivations through the 20th century."[37] Thus anyone who attemps to avoid the term "magic" by referring to Agrippa's teachings as "occultism" faces the same accusation of falling into anachronism. Certainly, this does not pertain to the adjective "occult," which I do not reject but merely complement with the terms esoteric and esotericism, and this for the following reasons.

A scholarly term should convey as fully and unequivocally as possible the characteristics of the phenomenon it is attached to. The lexical family of terms based on the verb *occulere*/*occultare* conveys a broad and vague meaning of something that is hidden, as evident from Agrippa's treatment of the so-called *virtutes occultae*, "occult virtues" (which can refer to practically anything that is temporarily or permanently beyond man's sensory perception and rational cognition). Agrippa's philosophy is

[35] On the daunting difficulties of defining magic see a detailed discussion of Benedek Láng, *Unlocked Books. Manuscripts of Learned Magic in the Medieval Libraries of Central Europe* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 17–43. "Apparently," writes Láng, "the notion of magic, with all its historical, psychological, ethnological, sociological, and scientific aspects and modifications, eludes every attempt at one final and exact definition" (19).

[36] Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 884–89. Both Classical and Medieval Latin know the verbs *occulere* and *occultare* ("to conceal, hide") and the adjective *occultus* ("hidden"), but not the noun *occultismus*; see LS, 1251–52, BLS, 631. (For the list of abbreviations see the bibliographical section at the end of this work.)

[37] Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 888. However, it should be noted that that the terminological problems in this field are far from being settled in the ongoing scholarly debates, on which see Hanegraaff's Introduction, *ibid.*, x–xi.

"occult" because it is based on such virtues and because it is hidden from and unknown to most people. However, the interpretive power of the term is more or less exhausted with this notion of secrecy and mystery.[38] On the other hand, the lexical family stemming from the Classical Greek adjective ἐσωτερικός ("inward," as opposed to ἐξωτερικός, "outward"[39]) carries a stronger interpretive power based on the dichotomy between the internal and the external. As I will show in my analysis, Agrippa's religious thought is decisively marked by this pair of opposites (the inner vs. the outer man; the internal vs. the external religion), which, in my opinion, justifies the use of the lables esoteric and esotericism. This is how I employ this term throughout my examination, in addition to its more general range of meanings as the historical construct explained above. I do not take esotericism to be a *sui generis* phenomenon, as might be suspected from the way Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke discusses it in the above-quoted passage. I do not attach any intrinsic qualities to esotericism as something entirely different from religion and philosophy. My approach is decisively "etic" and I use the term merely as an analytical tool bereft of its rich non-scholarly load.[40]

Another analytical advantage of the term "esotericism" is that it tends to be less directly associated with magic than the term "occultism," which is often taken almost as its synonym. On the other hand, as mentioned above, esotericism implies stronger connections to religion. This will be of considerable importance in my analysis as I will demonstrate that Agrippa's understanding of magic was profoundly religious.

Finally, I occasionally use another apparently vague term, "syncretism,"[41] which shows a double advantage: first, it calls to mind the basic conceptual framework in which Agrippa operated

[38] In fact, Agrippa evidently uses the term *occulta philosophia* instead of *magia* as being less offensive, but with the idea that the two are synonymous.
[39] LSJ, 700, 601.
[40] The reader will notice that large parts of my analysis do not require the use of this term at all. It is true, but the overarching context and my final interpretation, as becomes evident in Chapter Five, rely heavily on the opposition between the internal and the external, thus calling for the use of the term "esoteric."
[41] In this I follow Nauert, e. g. *Agrippa*, 125, and a number of other scholars too.

(that of a postulated spiritual synthesis) and, second, it enables me to skip a terminological trap related to the problem of determining the "exact" affiliation of the Renaissance syncretists: namely, if they should be termed Platonists, Neoplatonists, Hermetists, Hermetic Neoplatonists, Christian Kabbalists or in some other, perhaps even more convoluted way.[42] Hence I sometimes use the phrases "Renaissance syncretism" and "Renaissance esotericism" as second-order blanket terms for all the alternatives mentioned here. These terms, when used in the above-delineated sense, provide a useful umbrella concept that surpasses the more narrowly construed phenomena such as magic, astrology, alchemy, etc. Thus, at least in Agrippa's case, both "syncretism" and "esotericism" are meant to encompass all the main sources of his spiritual and intellectual inspiration as punctually delineated by Charles Nauert: medieval magic, Neoplatonism, Kabbalah, Hermetism, but in a certain sense, which will be discussed in this thesis, also Biblical Christianity with a significant degree of Christian antirationalism.[43]

The problem of selecting the most appropriate term for the Renaissance syncretists has much to do with one of the main historical sources of their inspiration, the Late Antiquity with its perplexing religious and philosophical pluralism. One of the main intellectual currents in that age marked by a thorough-going syncretism of religion, philosophy, and mythology was Plato's philosophy interpreted through various eastern traditions. In Agrippa's case, the most influential interpretations were those of the Neoplatonists (above all Plotinus and Iamblichus) and the *Corpus Hermeticum*, especially in their

[42] Speaking of terminological nuances, I adopt Hanegraaff's distinction between "Hermetism," understood as referring strictly to the collection of the late antique Hermetic treatises and their reception history, and the frequently used "Hermeticism," a vague category serving as a blanket term for a wide variety of esoteric currents; see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 332 n. 283.

[43] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 116–56. As for the Christian appropriation of the Jewish Kabbalah, I use that particular term, although the forms "Cabala" and "Kabbalism" are also in use among scholars. In this I follow Moshe Idel, e.g., his "Revelation and the 'Crisis of Tradition' in Kabbalah: 1475–1575" in *Constructing Tradition. Means and Myths of Transition in Western Esotericism*, ed. Andreas B. Kilcher (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010): 255-292. The form "Christian Cabala" can be found, e.g., in Joseph Leon Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), and "Christian Kabbalism" in Francis Mercury van Helmont, *Sketch of Christian Kabbalism*, tr. and ed. Sheila A. Spector (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012).

various Christianized forms. The same goes for Agrippa's anthropology, which will be examined in my thesis with regard to these major fields of religious and philosophical thought.[44]

The sources

Out of a considerably large number of Agrippa's works, I focus on those in which he expresses his anthropological views in some detail. Above all, this pertains to his famous occult encyclopedia. As for the other sources, I have in mind those texts that must have shaped Agrippa's own anthropological views according to what is known about him both from the biographical evidence and from his own works. They are occasionally discussed in the course of my analysis and provide a comparative perspective.

***De occulta philosophia libri tres* (1510/1533)**

The *De occulta philosophia* is by far the most important source for examining Agrippa's ideas of man since it is in this work that the author elaborates on some crucial concepts such as the microcosm–macrocosm correspondences, the emanational origin of man's presence in this world, the structure of human psyche, etc. Especially relevant in this regard are Books I and III, dealing with natural and ceremonial magic respectively. I base my analysis on the indispensable critical edition provided by Vittoria Perrone Compagni, which is all the more precious since it clearly indicates the textual differences between the 1510 unpublished draft and 1533 edition of the work. These differences are sometimes important for the analysis as they reveal changes in Agrippa's points of view, attitudes, and intellectual priorities over time. On the other side, they also emphasize those aspects of Agrippa's thought that did not change in the course of his life. Moreover, Perrone Compagni has done most of the

[44] My analysis does not include Agrippa's readings in Jewish and Christian Kabbalah for I lack the required competence in Hebrew. However, as demonstrate in the analysis, I maintain that the main traits of Agrippa's anthropology can be sufficiently delineated by reference to his Neoplatonic and Hermetic sources. After all, Neoplatonism was one of the formative components of medieval Jewish mysticism too, on which see e.g. Idel, *Ascensions on High*, 16; 41–46.

necessary source hunt, upon which I rely gratefully and abundantly.

As I put particular emphasis on the philological aspects of my analysis, I juxtapose each Latin quotation with its 1651 English translation made by a J. F. (often identified as James Freake) and partly redacted by Donald Tyson.[45] Interestingly enough, the translator's renditions and word choices occasionally reveal important problems related to some of my main research questions.

My work is thus primarily concerned with Agrippa's occult encyclopedia. However, it is a difficult work to analyze due to the author's peculiar mode of indirect argumentation: he restricts his authorial role to merely *presenting* different beliefs and opinions while too often he avoids taking a clear stance himself.[46] Thus Philip Beitchman conveniently calls him "an inveterate name dropper" whose works sometimes seem like annotated lists of ancient authors.[47] In fact, as I discuss later, Agrippa deliberately uses the strategy of piling up endless enumerations and all sorts of detailed yet all too vague information in order to conceal his own voice.[48]

Another problem to be taken into account is the unusual diachronic perspective of the *De occulta philosophia*—a work that acquired its final form after more than two decades of reshaping, rewriting, and rethinking. How should one read a work with such a pronounced temporal perspective? Virgil took ten years to complete his *Aeneid*, and yet, he was unable to finish it. The core of the problem is, of course, Agrippa's well-known recantation of his own occult work, which first appeared

[45] In doing so, I emulate Marc van der Poel with his way of citing. It leads to a somewhat complicated but necessary way of referencing, which I will be using in the remaining part of my thesis: first, the number of the book and the chapter; next, the page in Perrone Compagni's critical edition abbreviated as *DOP*; finally, the page in the Freake–Tyson translation abbreviated as Tyson; e. g. III 36, *DOP* 507, Tyson 579. This, I hope, will facilitate the reader's orientation in Agrippa's work in both languages. As for the identity of J. F., see Tyson, xl.

[46] He makes sure to emphasize this point strongly enough in his preface (*Ad lectorem*): *nam et ego vobis illa non probo, sed narro* ("for I do not approve of them, but declare them to you"); *admonui vos multa me narrando potius quam affirmando scripsisse* ("I have admonished you that I have written many things rather narratively than affirmatively") (*DOP* 65–66, Tyson *li*).

[47] Philip Beitchman, *Alchemy of the Word. Cabala of the Renaissance* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), 119.

[48] Thus Christopher Lehrich, *The Language of Angels and Demons*, 127, rightly points out that it is typical of the *De occulta philosophia* that the author's crucial phrases "should be hidden in the middle of a largely unremarkable chapter." See the overview of relevant scholarly contributions, below.

in Chapter 48 of his other main writing, the *De vanitate*, but was later appended by the author himself to all the published editions of the *De occulta philosophia*.[49] I briefly discuss Agrippa's recantation in the biographical section and in the overview of recent scholarship. In view of much of this scholarship, the recantation is simply not what it appears to be on the face of it.

Agrippa's anthropological treatises (1515–18)

In addition to his occult encyclopedia, Agrippa's three smaller treatises that I label "anthropological" are of paramount importance for my examination as they discuss in detail various points related to man and his position in this world. These are the *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* (On Three Ways of Knowing God), the unfinished *Dialogus de homine* (A Dialogue on Man), and the *De originali peccato* (On Original Sin). The first two were authored about 1515–16, during Agrippa's important stay in Italy, and the last one in 1518, after he moved to Metz.[50] These works are characterized by a more straightforward argumentation and a much simpler structure. They are also an important testimony to the ways Agrippa's intellectual horizons developed over time as the period of their origin falls roughly halfway between the creation of the juvenile version of *De occulta philosophia* and that of *De vanitate*.[51] In contrast to their significance for understanding Agrippa's anthropology, these minor writings have so far received comparatively little scholarly attention.

[49] For more on Agrippa's recantation see the biographical section, next chapter.

[50] This dating is proposed by Marc van der Poel, *Agrippa, The Humanist Theologian*, 225–49, and Wouter Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic. Cornelius Agrippa and Lazzarellian Hermetism," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* , Vol. 4, No. 1 (Summer, 2009): 1–25. Alternately, Nauert places the *De originali peccato* in 1516.

[51] Of these three treatises, only the *De originali peccato* is still without its critical edition; thus, I use the facsimile edition in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Opera* II (Hildesheim/New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1970), 551–65. For the other two I rely on the existing critical editions: Paola Zambelli, ed., "Agrippa di Nettesheim, *Dialogus de homine*," *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, XIII (1958); Vittoria Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo in Agrippa. Il "De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum"* (Firenze: Edizioni Polistampa 2005). Perrone Compagni, *ibid*., 37, notes that the *Dialogus de homine* is probably closely based on Agrippa's lost lectures on Ficino's *Pimander* that he gave in Pavia in 1515. See also Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic" 17.

De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum atque artium (1526)

Although it is commonly regarded as one of Agrippa's two most important works, I pay much less attention to the *De vanitate* than to the above-mentioned writings: it treats anthropological issues scarcely, and when it does, it is in the context of man's epistemological limitations. Certainly, epistemology cannot be separated from anthropology and I take into account the *De vanitate* whenever necessary, but the focus of my research questions makes this work less relevant for me.[52]

The genre and literary peculiarities of the *De vanitate* still present serious analytical problems: here, again, the main difficulty is how to elicit Agrippa's own standpoint amid endless references to various Christian and non-Christian authorities. His deliberately elusive strategy of argumentation leaves plenty of room for interpretation. It has been a matter of long debates as how to approach and interpret the German humanist's fierce yet multifaceted rejection of all human arts and disciplines—magic included—especially in the light of his other writings.

As discussed in my overview of relevant scholarship below, there seems to be a broad if not universal consensus among present-day Agrippan scholars that the *De vanitate* does not plainly reject magic as such. Along with other "arts" and "sciences," it puts it into a proper epistemological perspective in which there ought to be an external, divine reference point that makes these disciplines not only licit but also meaningful.

The structure of the dissertation

The main body of the dissertation is divided into five chapters. In Chapter One I provide a necessary historical introduction with an emphasis on those aspects of Agrippa's life and writings that I examine more closely. In this chapter I also give a detailed overview of the relevant scholarship and discuss my own approach and methodology with regard to the main research questions. Chapter Two deals with the

[52] To my knowledge, there is no critical edition of *De vanitate*. Therefore, I use the facsimile edition in the *Opera* II, 1–310.

basic tenets of Agrippa's cosmology and cosmogony, which set the ground for his understanding of man's nature and ontological status in this world. In Chapter Three I analyse the core notions of Agrippa's anthropology, which are articulated in two triads: that of soul, body, and spirit, and of sensitive soul, rational soul, and the mind. In Chapter Four I apply the results of my analysis to Agrippa's magical theory with the idea of elucidating the mechanisms lying behind different types of magic. Based on my examination, I argue that Agrippa's magical theory is intrinsically tied to his religious self-identification. Finally, in Chapter Five I perform a more in-depth analysis of Agrippa's anthropological notions by examining his ideas on man's fall and salvation, which are closely related to his exegetical work. I use the results of my analysis to revisit the problem of Agrippa's religious self-identification and offer a new interpretation of the tense coexistence between his evident heterodoxy and self-proclaimed orthodoxy.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT, PROBLEMS, METHODS

AGRIPPA'S LIFE AND MAIN WORKS

What follows is not an exhaustive account of Cornelius Agrippa's rather turbulent life, but a necessary contextualized chronology that aims to locate him more clearly in his time and space.[53] Some relevant points of his biography will be considered more closely in the course of my analysis.

To some extent, certainly, Agrippa's incoherent intellectual output could be explained away as a mark of idiosyncrasy, but pursuing such a track would inevitably lead to over-simplification and speculative psychologizing: much of what is nowadays viewed as the German occultist's intellectual inconsistency undoubtedly owes a great deal to a deeply disturbed and rapidly changing epoch he lived in.[54] Like so many others among his fellow humanists, Agrippa can be seen as a sort of early modern Ahasver whose frequent travels and abrupt changes of residence made a decisive imprint on his life and identity. As his biographer succinctly puts it, Agrippa "was involved in the intellectual currents of not just one or two places, but of a whole succession of *milieux*. Except for his boyhood, he resided in no country more than seven years, in no city as much as four."[55] No doubt, even such a minute biographical detail portends considerable hermeneutic difficulties in facing the works of this extraordinary character.

[53] This account mostly relies on Nauert, *Agrippa*, 8–115. To a large extent it also follows the biographical sketch given in my own work, *The Pious Impiety*, 10–20. One might also consult the following works: Perrone Compagni's "Introduction" in *DOP*, 1–10; Van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 15–49; Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 25–32; Michaela Valente, "Agrippa, Heinrich Cornelius" in: Hanegraaff, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 4–8. Several years before his death Charles Nauert also provided a useful online biography of the German occultist, see http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agrippa-nettesheim/ [last accessed: 4/2/2016].

[54] For a detailed discussion of the shifting cultural circumstances in the centuries surrounding Agrippa's lifetime see Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550. An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1980). For an illuminating example of a "hybrid identity" shaped by such circumstances see Natalie Z. Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

[55] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 6.

The early years: education and encounters with important men

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim was born in the free imperial city of Cologne in 1486, in the year in which Pico della Mirandola wrote his *Oratio de hominis dignitate*. It was the same year in which the Hermetist "prophet" Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio appeared in Florence, where he was arrested and humiliated by the order of none other than Lorenzo il Magnifico, the alleged patron of Ficino's "Platonic Academy"—an incident that epitomized all the contradictions and dangers of pursuing an esoteric career in that day.[56]

It was during Agrippa's early childhood that the mass expulsion of the Jews from Spain took place. Many of them found their way to the Italian lands, where they took part in a newly emerging scholarly network. This fervent new intellectual climate would prove to be of great importance for the German humanist several decades later.

Agrippa's parents most probably belonged to the upper bourgeoisie or lower nobility resident in the city; in any case, they were able to provide for their son's formal education at the University of Cologne, where he matriculated in 1499—the year of Marsilio Ficino's death—and received his licentiate in arts in 1502. According to Agrippa's own testimony, it was his parents who fostered his early interest in occult arts and taught him the basics of astrology.[57]

Although not much is known about the period of Agrippa' studies (there is no surviving personal correspondence prior to 1507), there is no doubt that it was of pivotal importance for him at least in two ways. First, it was during his studies that Agrippa received a firm scholarly basis for his future esoteric pursuits. He became closely acquainted with Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*, probably from hearing the lectures of the learned Johannes Rack von Sommerfeld.[58] His readings of

[56] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Ruud M. Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447-1500). The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 33–35.
[57] Agrippa's remark in a letter to the abbot Trithemius; see Agrippa, *Epistolae*, I, 23, n.d., in *Opera* II, 702–3.
[58] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 12. The loose, encyclopedic structure of the *De occulta philosophia* clearly betrays Pliny's influence.

Pliny, as well as those of Albert the Great, a major native figure of Cologne and its university, undoubtedly stirred his interest in natural philosophy and *magia naturalis* related to it.[59] Due to the activities of another of his teachers, Andreas Canterius, Agrippa discovered the Catalonian philosopher and mystic Ramon Lull, one of the intellectual figures that became highly influential in his own thought.

What is even more important in the context of my own examination is Agrippa's exposure to a particular "mode" of Christianity rooted at the Cologne University. As Charles Nauert points out, this university was one of the chief centers of Thomism in the late fifteenth century. Interestingly enough, there was a split in the faculty, but not between the *antiqui* and the *moderni* as elsewhere, but between the Thomists, "who usually had the upper hand, and the Albertists, those who preferred the authority of the great native doctor."[60] This split might have affected Agrippa in a specific way. As already mentioned, his "Albertism" is mostly reduced to his interest in Albert's natural philosophy. On the other hand, Agrippa's numerous polemical writings and religious controversies he was involved in later in his life reveal a strong anti-Thomist position that he must have developed during his student days. In other words, for Agrippa, the "official" theology of the Church, the one that he so often polemicized with, was above all Thomist scholasticism.[61] The doctrinal Christianity he so vehemently challenged and refuted was mostly Thomism in its later, degenerated forms that he scathingly called *logomachia*.[62]

[59] Agrippa names Albert's *Speculum astronomiae* as one of the first texts that he read on the subject of magic and astrology. See his letter to Theodoricus, Bishop of Cyrene, Metz, 6 February 1518, quoted in Nauert, *Agrippa,* 12.

[60] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 11–12. On the notions of *antiqui* and *moderni* in university and the scholastic documents of the fifteenth century see William J. Courtenay, "*Antiqui* and *Moderni* in Late Medieval Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas,* Vol. 48, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar. 1987): 3–10.

[61] Thus, when I examine the extent of Agrippa's unorthodoxy, I usually take Aquinas as the standard of orthodoxy; see also Frank Klaassen, *The Transformations of Magic. Illicit Learned Magic in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2013), 188: "Aquinas's corpus formed the core of moral theology in the sixteenth century and, even for humanists, was very much the standard by which orthodoxy was measured."

[62] This is further confirmed by the fact that throughout his life Agrippa's main theological opponents were the Dominicans. See also Agrippa's appeal to the Senate of Cologne, Bonn, 11 January 1533, *Epist.* VII, 26 (*Opera* II, 1035), in which "he described the doctors of the university as slavish followers of Aristotle and Averroes, two pagan philosophers most hostile to Christian teaching, and of Thomas and Albert, who taught the doctrines of the same pagans" (Nauert, *Agrippa,* 13). See

There are some doubts about Agrippa's further university degrees. He often claimed to have doctorates in theology, canon and civil law, as well as in medicine. There are no documents proving all these degrees, but Nauert leaves some room for the possibility that the German humanist could have obtained some of them in the years preceding his earliest known letter (1507), in Paris, or during his lengthy Italian period.[63] As for his doctorate in theology, Agrippa explicitly claimed he had obtained it in the course of his university lecturing in Dôle (see below).[64] In any case, it is evident from many later occasions in his life that Agrippa possessed a considerable knowledge in all these fields.

The year 1507 marks the beginning of Agrippa's surviving correspondence. Thus we know that, for reasons not entirely clear, he moved to Paris, where he soon entered the circle of French enthusiast humanists such as Symphorien Champier and Charles de Bouelles. The reason for this move could have been the continuation of his studies or a diplomatic mission on behalf of Emperor Maximilian I, whose service Agrippa most probably entered after his studies in Cologne.[65] During his stay in Paris Agrippa apparently formed, or joined, a group of like-minded men interested in occult disciplines which might have had some features of a secret society.[66] By the time of his stay in this city Agrippa was already closely acquainted with Marsilio Ficino's Latin translations and works on Platonism and Hermetism, as well as with those of Pico della Mirandola and Johann Reuchlin on the Kabbalah and its Christian reinterpretation. It evidently follows from the fact that in 1509 Agrippa was offered the opportunity to give a course of lectures at the University of Dôle on Reuchlin's Kabbalistic treatise *De verbo mirifico* ("On the Miraculous Word," 1494). This brought him an accusation from the local

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also Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 50–93, for Agrippa's vehement anti-scholastic position. Van der Poel notes though that Agrippa respected the three great masters of scholasticism: Albert, Aquinas, and Duns Scotus (58).

[63] See his arguments in Nauert, *Agrippa*, 10–11.

[64] *Ibid*., 26.

[65] *Maximiliano a prima aetate destinatus aliquandiu illi a minoribus secretibus fui* (*Epist.* I, 21, *Opera* II, 1021); see also Nauert, *Agrippa*, 14–15.

[66] On the possible character of this society and its similarities to numerous esoteric "academies" of the Ficinian type, see Nauert, *Agrippa*, 18–19.

Franciscans of being a judaizing heretic and spoiled his hopes for the academic career in Dôle. It also marked the beginning of a long series of conflicts between Agrippa and clergymen that followed him throughout his life. While in Dôle, he wrote his famous treatise titled *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* ("On the Nobility and Superiority of the Female Sex"), composed at least partly with the idea of winning the favor of Margaret of Austria, governor of Franche-Comté and the Low Countries.[67]

The year 1510 was of fundamental importance for Cornelius Agrippa and his entire future work as he met two men who would influence him profoundly and come to symbolize the two main tracks of his lifelong interests. Firstly, he met Johann Trithemius, the abbot of Sponheim (at that time residing in the monastery of St. James in Würzburg), a renowned theologian, humanist, and an already ill-famed occultist himself. Agrippa visited Trithemius in Würzburg and discussed different occult matters with him. The abbot encouraged the 23-year old man in his studies and advised him concerning a magical treatise Agrippa had written (and even prepared for publishing, according to Paola Zambelli). It was the juvenile version of his famous *De occulta philosophia*, which Agrippa dedicated to his spiritual tutor.[68]

Later that year, probably accompanying an imperial diplomatic mission, Agrippa traveled to London, where he met John Colet, a leading English Erasmian humanist and dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Agrippa attended Colet's lectures on the Epistles of St. Paul. If Trithemius fostered Agrippa's further interest in the occult, John Colet did the same for Biblical studies, especially

[67] Blau calls this puzzling treatise a "political exercise," thus indicating that Agrippa's only intention was to secure Margaret's patronage: see Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala*, 82. This broadly held attitude, however, fails to account for what would be, in terms of theology, quite a strange way of winning a patron as conservative as the daughter of Maximilian I (see below for Agrippa's later experiences with this powerful figure). For a more in-depth examination of the treatise, see Nauert, *Agrippa*, 27. As for more recent "feminist" approaches, see Barbara Newman, "Renaissance Feminism and Esoteric Theology: the Case of Cornelius Agrippa", *Viator* 24 (1993): 337–56. Newman rightly points out that "the slippery genre of *declamatio* or paradox is responsible for much of Agrippa's ambiguity" (338).

[68] Agrippa did not publish the manuscript only because Trithemius advised him not to; on this "prescription of initiatic silence" see Paola Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic in the European Renaissance. From Ficino, Pico, Della Porta to Trithemius, Agrippa, Bruno* (Brill: Leiden/Boston, 2007), 187. On the master-apprentice relationship between Trithemius and Agrippa, and their joint endeavor to cleanse magic from its ill fame, see Noel Brann, *Trithemius and Magical Theology. A Chapter in the Controversy over Occult Studies in Early Modern Europe* (New York: SUNY Press, 1999), 152–56.

Pauline theology, as will be discussed later in this work. A clear indication of the scope of Colet's influence was Agrippa's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, unfortunately lost for us, which best exemplifies the exegetical strand of the Nettesheimer's thought.

Oriundus Colonia, educatione Italus: Agrippa's Italian period

This period lasted from 1511 to 1518. The Nettesheimer spent most of that time as captain in the army of Maximilian I in northern Italy, and some of it as university lecturer, mainly in Pavia and Turin. Agrippa's Italian period was of pivotal importance for the formation of both his humanist and esoteric perspectives as he was intensely exposed to a humanist culture shaped by the Florentine Neoplatonism and Hermetism, as well as by the fervent tradition of the Kaballah and its Christian appropriations mediated by many resident Jewish scholars and converts.[69] In this he had a number of predecessors, the northerners descending to Italy for inspiration, such as Celtis, Reuchlin, and Erasmus, but by the time of Agrippa's arrival the cradle of humanism was steeped in the chaos of the French-Italian wars.[70] Nevertheless, apart from his military and diplomatic service, he managed to dedicate a considerable amount of time to his esoteric studies and he quickly established fervent connections with a number of like-minded scholars. The importance of these formative years spent in Italy was perhaps best expressed by a friend of Agrippa, who in his letter to the German humanist described him as "being from Cologne only by birth, but being an Italian by education."[71] As it would show later in his life, "Italian" above all meant—Ficinian, Lazzarellian, and Mirandolean.

The Nettesheimer was also engaged in the pursuit of a stable academic position—a goal that

[69] As Nauert points out, most of his occultist friends and acquaintances in Italy are not known by name, the only exceptions being the converted Jewish scholar Agostino Ricci and, possibly, his much more famous brother, the important religious controversialist and translator Paolo Ricci, see Nauert, *Agrippa*, 41. Agrippa's connection with the latter was suggested by Zambelli, ed., *Dialogus de homine*, 52–53, whereas Nauert remains more skeptical in this regard.

[70] See John. A. Marino, "Italy in the Long Sixteenth Century," in *Handbook of European History in the Later Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation, 1400–1600*, ed. Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 331–67; Michael Mallett and Christine Shaw, *The Italian Wars, 1494–1559* (London/New York: Routledge, 2012), 116–38.

[71] *Epist*. III 15, *Opera II*, 730 (Amicus ad Agrippam): *est oriundus Colonia, educatione Italus*.

was destined to remain his unfulfilled dream. Thus, for instance, he was invited to lecture at the University of Pavia on two occasions: first in 1512, when he lectured on Plato's *Symposium,* and again in 1515, when he taught a course on the *Pimander*, Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. The only surviving part of that course is his introductory speech titled *Oratio habita Papiae in praelectione Hermetic Trismegisti De Potestate et Sapientia Dei*.

Sometime between 1515 and 1517 Agrippa also lectured at the University of Turin, probably on the Epistles of St. Paul. It was during his flight from Pavia, after the French victory at Marignano in 1515, that he lost his incomplete commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans, found later by a student of his, but ultimately—and most unfortunately—lost again.[72] Towards the end of Agrippa's stay in Italy, in 1517, Reuchlin published his second major work on Christian Kabbalah, the *De arte cabalistica*—a work that was to be added to the ever increasing list of both acknowledged and unacknowledged references in Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia*. Significantly, Agrippa's readings in the Italian period included Francesco Giorgio's *De harmonia mundi* and Lodovico Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis*, a work that, according to Vittoria Perrone Compagni, the German humanist came across sometime before 1516.[73]

Agrippa's Italian period proved exceptionally important and fruitful for his own literary production. Sometime around 1515, probably while lecturing on the *Pimander*, he wrote a short work titled *Dialogus de homine* (Dialogue on the human race), which I examine in some detail later in my thesis.[74] In 1516 Agrippa wrote a treatise titled *Liber de triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* (On the three ways of knowing God, hereafter: *De triplici ratione*) which he dedicated to Guglielmo Paleologo, marquis of Monferrato, one of his patrons at the time. Both works treat various anthropological topics

[72] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 51. The student who found it was Christoph Schylling of Lucerne. See also Van der Poel, *Agrippa, The Humanist Theologian*, 21. Van der Poel emphasizes St. Paul's theological influence on the young Agrippa.
[73] Perrone Compagni, "Dispersa intentio," 164.
[74] The *Dialogus de homine* remained unpublished during Agrippa's lifetime and has only survived in fragmentary form. Agrippa incorporated parts of it in the final version of the *De occulta philosophia*.

and are thus of considerable importance for my analysis. Another short text dating roughly to the same time is Agrippa's *Dehortatio gentilis theologiae* (A dissuasion against pagan theology), written as a discouragement to some friends of his who inquired about the teachings of Hermes Trismegistos. Here already one finds an anticipation of the future rift created by Agrippa's two major works: the *Dehortatio* seems to refute the very foundations of the *De triplici ratione*. In any case, these three works, along with the lost commentary of St. Paul, clearly exhibit the two parallel tracks of Agrippa's spiritual and intellectual involvement that he would pursue to the very end of his life. It was towards the closure of Agrippa's Italian period that Martin Luther posted his ninety-five theses. As if to witness closely the development of a new major religious development, Agrippa decided to move to "the spiritually upset North of Europe."[75] This move brought about a series of changes in his life and status. For a start, it definitely marked the end of his university career.

Back to the North: the years of steady municipal service

Sometime around 1518 Agrippa moved to the free imperial city of Metz, where he had been offered the position of public advocate and legal advisor to the magistrate. During his stay in Metz Agrippa followed Luther's activities with a considerable interest.[76] While in Metz he was also involved in two important incidents: he rescued a peasant woman accused of witchcraft and debated with local theologians and clergy over a brief treatise written by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples on the monogamy of St. Anne.[77] All of this added fuel to Agrippa's steadily developing conflict with the Dominicans and Franciscans. Having spent two turbulent years in Metz and a short break in his hometown, Agrippa moved to Geneva (1521-1523), and then to Fribourg (1523-1524). In both places he earned for living

[75] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 154.
[76] The questions of Agrippa's loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church and his inclinations toward various reform movements will be examined in some detail later in this work. As for his well-known explicit allegiance to Rome, see Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 133–36.
[77] For a different view on Agrippa's role in the witchcraft episode see Vera Hoorens, Hans Renders, "Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and Witchcraft: A Reappraisal," *Sixteenth Century Journal* XLIII/1 (2012): 3–18. The authors argue that Agrippa did believe in witchcraft and actually supported the capital punishment of witches.

mostly as a practicing physician. Contrary to what he sought to achieve, these restless years saw him change patrons and occupations quite frequently, the only constant being his growing reputation in European occult and humanist circles. The plurality of Agrippa's interests thus embraced things so distant and hardly reconcilable such as magical and alchemical experiments, public humanist engagement of the Erasmian type (clearly noticeable in Agrippa's growing participation in the "republic of letters"), as well as his overt interest in the various emerging forms of the Reformation, including its radical branches.

The French period: a bitter life at the court

Ever since he left Italy Agrippa was unable to settle down for more than a year or two. Finally another longer period of stability ensued, at least in terms of the place of abode, the one we might term Agrippa's French period. In 1524 he moved to Lyon, accepting the position of physician to Louise of Savoy, the mother of King Francis I. Contrary to his expectations, however, Agrippa soon discovered that it was not a promising position. First of all, his engagement in reality turned to be that of a court astrologer, something Agrippa openly detested. Even worse, the Queen Mother proved to be negligent of her physician and parsimonious concerning his salary. Before long, the renowned occultist found himself hopelessly trapped in various intrigues and intricacies of courtly life he could not cope with subtly enough. With practically no income at all, Agrippa grew increasingly bitter and frustrated, a fact his correspondence from the Lyon period shows quite clearly. It was in such circumstances that he wrote, in 1526, the other of his two pivotal works, a fierce declamation titled *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium* ("On the Uncertainty and Vanity of Sciences and Arts"), modeled consciously after Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. Not only did the famous magician attack magic in this work, but he also explicitly recanted his involvement in magic. To what extent Agrippa's grave circumstances influenced the composition of that work is certainly a matter of interpretation, but the

biographical epilogue is straightforward enough: his sharp tongue and careless criticism of Louise eventually made his further stay in France unbearable and even dangerous: towards the end of 1527 he resigned and practically fled from France.

Agrippa' closing years: finally at the printing press

The next five years, from 1528 to 1532, Agrippa spent in the Low Countries, mostly in Antwerp, where due to the help of some influential friends he obtained the position of imperial archivist and historiographer on the court of Margaret of Austria, governor of the Habsburg Netherlands. Probably for the first time ever, Agrippa acquired the opportunity to print his works: in 1529 or 1530, while still enjoying Margaret's favor, he obtained an imperial *privilegium* to publish several of them, most importantly the *De occulta philosophia* and the *De vanitate*. Within a few years' time Agrippa managed to publish almost all of the writings he had been working on throughout his life (with the exception of the *Dialogus de homine*, a minor work on geomancy, and the majority of his letters): the *De vanitate* and a number of smaller treatises appeared in 1529, and the first book of the *De occulta philosophia* in 1531. This was also the period of Agrippa's intense engagement in magical and alchemical experiments with his occultist friends.

The publication of the fiercely intonated *De vanitate* made Agrippa lose his patron's favor. Influenced by the monastic circles, Margaret came to suspect her historiographer's orthodoxy and required an opinion from the theologians of the University of Louvain. They condemned the work as heretical, a condemnation followed by an even more influential one, that of the Sorbonne theologians. Instead of trying to minimize the damage, Agrippa reacted by writing two fierce polemical replies, the *Apologia adversus calumnias* and *Querella super calumnia*. In order to provide a stronger support for his humanist cause, Agrippa wrote to Erasmus and Philip Melanchthon among others, but to no avail. Once again his position was shaken: meanwhile Margaret died, and he was soon forced to quit his job

and leave the town.

After a brief imprisonment for debt in 1531, Agrippa visited Cologne and found a temporary refuge there under a new patron, the reform-minded Archbishop elector Hermann von Wied, to whom he dedicated the first book of his *De occulta philosophia*. It was in his hometown, in 1533, that Agrippa finally managed to publish the integral version of the *De occulta philosophia*. It took him almost a quarter of century to bring his life's work to the printing press. Coincidentally, it was the same year in which the young John Calvin experienced his religious conversion. Calvin, who would later call Agrippa a "barking dog,"[78] commenced his reform work only a year after Agrippa's death, thus announcing the closure of a period of relative openness in which the publication of works such as the *De occulta philosophia* was still possible without considerable dangers for one's life. Soon enough, the council of Trent, the Counter-Reformation with its project of social disciplining, and the violent process of confessionalization would change the intellectual climate of Western Europe drastically.[79]

The final publication of the *De occulta philosophia* is to be regarded as the ultimate proof of the German humanist's deep and sincere commitment to his literary works—something that is occasionally doubted even nowadays due to Agrippa's centuries-long reputation. Why else would one carry a manuscript along wherever he went and keep working on it throughout his life, constantly rewriting, revising and amplifying it? Why else would one take so many troubles to have it published and vehemently defend it against the criticizers?[80]

[78] See Perrone Compagni's "Introduction" in *DOP,* 44, for the reference.

[79] As R. H. Popkin puts it, "[H]ad Agrippa lived a generation later, when many of his own views had become officially heretical, he might have been forced to make a choice that he had managed to avoid in his own day… But, living in the generation before the lines were clearly drawn, Agrippa, like Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples, could remain a reform-minded religious teacher without being a Reformer." See Richard H. Popkin, "Introduction" in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Opera I* (Georg Olms Verlag: Hildesheim/New York, 1970), 19.

[80] For this type of common-sense argumentation against claims about Agrippa's frivolousness see Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian,* 52–53, and Perrone Compagni, "*Dispersa intentio*," 161. "In the same years in which he wrote the skeptical declamation," writes Perrone Compagni, "Agrippa was busy revising and amplifying his first draft of *De occulta philosophia*. Is it possible that the detailed and painstaking reordering of his early manuscript really be looked upon as only an excuse to discuss religious themes?"

Agrippa's surviving correspondence ends in the second half of 1533 or early 1534. Apart from a number of fantastic, often intentionally malicious reports depicting Agrippa's last moments in Faustian colors, the account of Johann Weyer (1515-1588), his student from the Antwerp days, provides a favorable and balanced view with a few additional facts.[81] One is Agrippa's unexplained journey to France in 1535, where Francis I, the son of the late Louise of Savoy, had him arrested for some old offences against her.[82] He was soon released with the help of his friends, but several months later got sick and died in Grenoble, at the age of forty-eight. Somewhat paradoxically, he was buried in the local Dominican church.

Agrippa's retraction: the epitome of the problem

This brief biographical sketch must end with the well-known chronological mismatch that has become the landmark of the entire "Agrippan question." As stated above, the German humanist wrote his *De vanitate* in 1526. In a series of chapters (30–48) he attacked and denounced various esoteric doctrines and practices as false, while in Chapter 48 he explicitly recanted his own *Occult philosophy* and involvement in esotericism with the following words:

> I also as a young man wrote on magical matters three books in a sufficiently large volume, which I have entitled *Of Hidden Philosophy*, in which books whatsoever was then done amiss through curious youth, now being more advised I will that it be recanted with this retraction, for I have in times past consumed very much time and substance in these vanities.[83]

However, instead of simply withdrawing from his esoteric pursuits, Agrippa had his "Hidden

[81] Weyer gave a biographical sketch of Agrippa in his work *De praestigiis daemonum*, portraying him as a sober and honorable person. See also Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, xxxiv-xxxv.

[82] According to Agrippa's nineteenth century biographer Henry Morley, referred to by Donald Tyson in Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, xxxiv, Emperor Charles V sentenced Agrippa to death at the urging of the Dominicans, and then changed his sentence into exile to France. Nauert, *Agrippa* 113–15, does not mention this sentence and leaves the question of Agrippa's final journey to France open.

[83] *Verum de magicis scripsi ego iuvenis adhuc libros tres, amplos satis volumine, quos de Occulta philosophia nuncupavi: in quibus quidquid tunc per curiosam adolescentiam erratum est, nunc cautior hac palinodia recantatum volo: permultum enim temporis et rerum in his vanitatibus olim contrivi* (*De vanitate, 48,* in *Opera* I, 82). The English translation is by James Stanford, as given in Lehrich, *Language of Demons and Angels*, 40.

Philosophy" published only a few years later (1533) and, in fact, went through numerous difficulties in order to accomplish that task. And yet, to make things even more complicated, he appended the entire section from the *De vanitate* condemning esoteric doctrines and practices to the published edition of the *De occulta philosophia*. This single point of chronological and intellectual inconsistency has become the watershed for modern scholarly approaches to Agrippa ever since Lynn Thorndike. It also led Michael Keefer to remark somewhat bitterly: "On the surface level, the question which his equivocations on the subject of magic pose for us is insoluble: his violent oscillations back and forth, his praise and condemnation of magic, his boasts, his threats, and his recantations, are quite simply unintelligible."[84] However, much of the present-day scholarship on Agrippa has come to a more nuanced picture of the problem, in which the opposites in question seem to lose their formerly acknowledged power. In fact, for some scholars, they cease to be opposites at all.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN LIGHT OF PRESENT-DAY SCHOLARSHIP

In this section I present my perspective of the most important scholarly interpretations of Agrippa's work, with the focus on the points relevant for my own examination. My hypotheses and assumptions will be tested against the background of the most pertinent scholarship. However, before I move on to the overview itself, I summarize once again my main research questions—this time in a somewhat amplified way, as a list of analytical *themes* to be considered. The overview following the list is supposed to show which of the themes have already been dealt with and in what manner, as well as to point at several more general lines of interpretation in the pertinent scholarship.

The main research themes

The complex topic of Agrippa's anthropology will be better envisaged if divided into single

[84] Keefer, "Agrippa's Dilemma," 650.

anthropological topics or subtopics which in one way or another direct the course of my analysis. These are the following (not necessarily in the order given here):

(1) Man's unique position within the great chain of being. The role of cosmic sympathies and correspondences in establishing man's position in the universe. The *homo imago Dei* doctrine.

(2) The personhood and the body–soul relations. Structural components: body, soul, and spirit; mind, rational soul, and sensitive soul.

(3) Man's capacity for attaining ascension. The nature of ascension: "magical" vs. "Christian"; *in corpore* vs. *in spiritu*; during one's lifetime vs. *post mortem*. Relations between the concepts of ascension and salvation/redemption.

(4) Man's prelapsarian status and the nature of the fall in Neoplatonic, Hermetic, and Christian paradigms. Spiritual regeneration or rebirth (both in its Pauline and Hermetic interpretations).

(5) The insufficiency of the dogmatically articulated Christian revelation as experienced by Renaissance syncretists. Multiple revelational traditions and their legitimacy.

(6) Last but not least: the notion(s) of piety as a state of mind/soul required for attaining ascension, either "magical" or "Christian." Piety as a construct in various contexts and traditions. The contested concepts of piety.

By examining how Cornelius Agrippa relates to each one of them I take these themes as my research questions. Obviously, to treat them all with equal scholarly care would require several dissertations. Thus I pay more attention to some and less to other issues, but they are all interrelated and bound to surface at some point of the analysis. Moreover, most of the listed topics and subtopics have already been dealt with by a number of scholars in different ways (although, as I pointed out above, not always in a systematic fashion). It is thus necessary to view them in the general context of scholarly approaches to the Nettesheimer and his intellectual world. To repeat it once again, my main

thesis is that Agrippa's anthropological views provide an excellent insight into his attempt to build certain Neoplatonic and Hermetic notions of man into his understanding of Christianity.

A redeemed humanist: scholars on Agrippa and his work

Fortunately enough, there is no need any more to justify one's scholarly interest in Cornelius Agrippa. The watershed in the academic treatment of the German occultist, marked by the activities of the scholars of the Warburg Institute from around the middle of the twentieth century, has brought about a steady increase of interest in Agrippa and his works up to the present day.

In the first place, Agrippa had the "misfortune" to be one of the authors whose thought and work were clearly recognized as esoteric and as such rejected form the serious academic field of study in the period ranging from the Enlightenment to the first half of the twentieth century. As Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke points out, "magic, astrology, and occultism … were generally perceived as survivals of superstition and irrationalism … and such topics were consigned to epistemological quarantine lest they cause a relapse from progressive rationalism."[85] Agrippa's position in this scheme was particularly unfavorable due to its own peculiarities and it remained so even some time after the academic "redemption" of esotericism initiated by the research of scholars such as Kristeller, Garin, and Thorndike. It was precisely the "Agrippan question"—in either of its forms of appearance, i.e. as skepticism vs. credulity or magic vs. piety—which informed the perception of a great many among the earlier generations of scholars. With nothing to indicate a clear pattern of development (such as that of "repentance" with no return to the previous unorthodox convictions), Agrippa's statements of spiritual allegiance are all desperately mixed up, at least in terms of chronology. This circumstance, in addition to Agrippa's centuries-long reputation of being a charlatan or black magician, resulted in a rather poor treatment he received in Lynn Thorndike's influential *History of Magic and Experimental Science*,

[85] Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions*, 3–4.

where the author judged him to be merely a dilettante, pretending to be knowledgeable and only superficially engaged in his studies. Thorndike saw Agrippa as a figure of little importance, and his *De occulta philosophia* as a "disappointing work."[86]

On the other hand, in his groundbreaking study titled *Spiritual and Demonic Magic: From Ficino to Campanella* (1958) D. P. Walker, one of the leading Warburg scholars, assigned Agrippa a more proper place in the Renaissance spiritual tradition. Walker linked the German occultist to Marsilio Ficino and analyzed his doctrines of magic in comparison to those of the Florentine Platonist.[87] In this work one no longer reads about the Thorndikean "dabbler and trifler" but instead faces a serious, albeit controversial thinker (as well as practitioner, as Walker emphasized by calling him a "magician") who developed some of Ficino's timid ideas (such as his image magic appearing under the guise of medicine) into a full-fledged magical system utterly incompatible with Christianity. In this regard Walker's position was clear: speaking of "an unresolved conflict in Agrippa's mind"[88] (a pattern further developed by Nauert), Walker maintained that under the mantle of Neoplatonism Agrippa sticks to the officially forbidden medieval ideas and practices of magic without even trying to make them theologically acceptable. Agrippa's terminology and underlying metaphysical scheme are Neoplatonic, argued Walker, but "he makes no effort to force [his Neoplatonic sources] into a Christian framework."[89] In addition to his insightful analysis of the links between Agrippa and Ficino, Walker's invaluable contribution lies in examining and elucidating Agrippa's attitude toward *all* religious and

[86] Lynn Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923-1958), Vol. 5, 129–38. This type of assessment is still found among academic historians of science. A good example is Richard S. Westfall, one of the foremost Isaac Newton scholars, who blatantly calls Agrippa "a self-aggrandizing liar," see http://galileo.rice.edu/Catalog/NewFiles/agrippa.html [last accessed: 29/3/2014]. However, Thorndike's assessment of Agrippa is by no means typical of his treatment of the phenomenon of magic in general; see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 317–22.

[87] Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 90–96. His contribution by far surpasses the case of Agrippa alone. As Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke notes, Walker's work was "a landmark study in Renaissance culture, showing that magic was part of the mainstream in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, closely connected with religion, music, mathematics and medicine." (Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions*, 2)

[88] Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 91.

[89] *Ibid*., 93.

spiritual traditions and attitudes including Christianity, superstition, and magic: for him, they are all of the same nature and can equally serve the magician's cause—a perspective Walker called a remarkably thorough-going syncretism. He went on to conclude that Agrippa's "magic was *really* demonic,"[90] unfortunately without attempting to qualify this attribution as if it were self-explanatory. Such an evaluation might lead one to suspect that Walker tacitly relied on the very same criteria that had been used by Agrippa's arch-enemies, the theologians of the Roman Church.[91] One has to bear in mind, however, that Agrippa made a careful distinction between demons and other forms of celestial *intelligentiae* and clearly did not approve of communicating with the former. What he saw as a crucial criterion in this regard was the discernment of spirits (*discretio spirituum*), although Walker did mention it as one of the central issues in any discussion on the problem of demonic magic.[92]

The case of Frances Yates, perhaps the most famous Warburg scholar, is curious for the considerable change of her scholarly attitudes over time. In her pivotal work *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964) she evidently followed Thorndike in her negative assessment of Agrippa, which is rather surprising given the prominence of the "man the operator" paradigm within her grand narrative (the so-called "Yates thesis") and the fact that Agrippa almost perfectly exemplifies this paradigm.[93] However, in her much later work *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (1979) one finds a different picture of the German occultist: he is now portrayed as a serious systematizer of

[90] *Ibid*., 96. Emphasis mine.

[91] Walker's binary "spiritual–demonic" scheme perhaps unintentionally replicates the common axiological categories of mainstream theology by equaling Ficino's "mild," "spiritual" magic to the relatively accepted notion of *magia naturalis*. This kind of transfer would certainly not be a novelty among scholars. See, for instance, Hanegraaff's discussion on the various scholarly theories of magic in Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 164–77; also Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 716–17. He also argues that in developing their theories both Durkheim and Mauss derived their assumptions from the traditional categories of Christian heresiology. See also Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 45, and Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 5–6.

[92] See Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 36–44. Frank L. Borchardt, "The *Magus* as Renaissance Man," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, No. 1 (1990): 57–76, criticizes Walker for his attempt to clearly differentiate between the "Italian contemplative magic" and the "crudely operative German magic."

[93] Agrippa's position in this early version of the "Yates thesis" is evidently less significant than those of Ficino and Pico. The *De occulta philosophia* is a "trivial work," and her interpretation of the Agrippan question, closely following Thorndike's, suggests that the renowned magician was a sciolist; see Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 146–60.

magical doctrines *and* a religious reformer much closer to Erasmus than to a Thorndikean pretender, as a man who tried to offer "a more powerful philosophy" to troubled Christianity.[94] It is important to pay attention to this more pronounced recognition and inclusion of the religious dimension of Agrippa's thought—a pattern that would prove fruitful in some of the later studies on the Nettesheimer.

Beyond the question of Agrippa's significance in the eyes of Frances Yates, however, is the importance of her "man the operator" paradigm for setting the conceptual framework within which to examine Agrippa's heterogeneous doctrines.[95] His entire spiritual enterprise, at least as delineated in the *De occulta philosophia*, is marked by a decisive emphasis on the magician's resolve and conscious effort (as elements of *dignificatio*) in achieving ascension. Certainly, it remains to be seen how exactly Agrippa's understanding of piety fits such a Pelagian perspective, which is undoubtedly problematic from the standard Christian point of view, at least in some of its aspects such as relying on direct communication with higher spiritual entities. Yates's view, which Hanegraaff formulates as "the reification of 'hermeticism' as a quasi-autonomous or independent tradition opposed to an ascetic and world-denying Christian orthodoxy,"[96] undoubtedly presents the problem in an over-simplified way.

Another important Yates's contribution, in which she closely followed D. P. Walker, lies in firmly establishing direct links between Agrippa and the Florentine Neoplatonists, primarily in terms of the Neoplatonic conceptual framework he adopted for developing his esoteric doctrines, as well as of his reliance on the late-antique *Corpus Hermeticum*. Placing Agrippa within the postulated "Hermetic movement," Yates viewed his doctrines as a further and, as it were, logical development of various

[94] Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 37–47. See also Putnik, *The Pious Impiety*, 21–22, for an interpretation of this shift in opinion.
[95] This concept implies a major turn in attitude of those aspiring for spiritual ascension: "What has changed is Man," writes Yates, "no longer the pious spectator of God's wonders in the creation...but Man the operator, Man who seeks to draw power from the divine and natural order," see Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, 144. See also Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 66–67. I agree with Lehrich that the almost unanimous scholarly rejection of the Yates thesis should not pertain to the "man the operator" paradigm, as long as it is not viewed in close correlation with the "man the scientist." For a contrary opinion and an exhaustive overview of the whole Yates debate see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 322–34. See also Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 42–47.
[96] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 334.

ideas implicated in Ficino's rather cautious attempts to legitimize his own esoteric theories and practices.[97] Regardless of all the flaws and weaknesses of Yates's "grand narrative," Agrippa's debt to Ficino and Pico, among other authors, can hardly be overstated. As I intend to demonstrate in my analysis, this is especially so in the domain of anthropology.

In contrast to Yates and other Warburg scholars, Paola Zambelli, a student of Eugenio Garin and one of the most important researchers of Agrippa and his work, has taken a different course right from the outset. As indicated by her pioneering work on the fragmentary *Dialogus de homine*, Zambelli focuses on the problematic relations between Agrippa's engagement in magic and his religious convictions, especially in the later years of his life, with the outburst of the Protestant Reformation. By choosing to redirect her analytical attention to the shadowy links between Renaissance esotericism and the Reformation, Zambelli has effectively downplayed the importance of the former for the birth of modern science.[98] According to Zambelli's main thesis, in the last decade of his life Agrippa maintained close personal relations and shared certain doctrinal views with various members of the Radical Reformation to a much larger extent than previously acknowledged by Nauert and other Agrippan scholars.[99] There is nothing new in claiming that the German occultist held a number of highly unorthodox convictions while at the same time he considered himself a genuine Christian, but Zambelli's close linking of his religious identity to the Radical Reformation, instead of the Erasmian humanist model of Biblical Christianity, was a bold thesis that has met with little consent among

[97] See also Paola Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic*, 1–10. Zambelli strongly suggests an image of Agrippa as someone who dared to speak out about things Ficino systematically prevaricated. This is in tune with D. P. Walker's laconic but significant remark that with Agrippa "Ficino has got into bad company"; see Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 96.

[98] "The Renaissance philosophy of magic," says Zambelli in the retrospective of her work, "which was both complex and elegant, enjoyed much success and was associated not so much with the "scientific revolution" as with the religious ferment caused by the Reformation, particularly the Radical Reformation (examples such as Agrippa, Paracelsus and Servetus)." See Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic*, 4.

[99] The core of Zambelli's argument can be found in her important paper "Magic and Radical Reformation in Agrippa of Nettesheim," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 39 (1976): 69–103.

scholars.[100] In support of her thesis that Agrippa was a "Nicodemite" (a clandestine adherent to some variant of the Radical Reformation) Zambelli has analyzed his views on the doctrine of psychopannychism (the so-called "sleep of souls") indicating that he could have been a secret follower of that heresy. Given that the "sleep of souls" doctrine was tightly connected with theological discussions on the soul's destiny after death and, evidently, on the soul's very nature and its relations to the body, Zambelli's work is of considerable interest for me in my own examination of Agrippa's anthropology.

Charles Nauert's influential *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought* (1965) is far more than just a scholarly biography. As the title of this work indicates, it is also an attempt to interpret Agrippa's "split position" within the broader context of a postulated spiritual and epistemological crisis in the Renaissance. In tune with the "Yates thesis," Nauert establishes a link between Agrippa's apparent disillusionment with magic and rising skepticism on the one hand, and a shift towards the epistemological foundations of science on the other, thus introducing a paradigm of the "disappointed" or "failed magus."[101] However, this move from credulity to disillusionment and skepticism should not be taken as a linear, straightforward development. As Noel Brann points out, Nauert is a subtle thinker who demonstrates that skepticism was operative in Agrippa's outlook from the beginning, gradually leading him to look for a "transrational means to truth."[102]

Following D. P. Walker, Nauert argues that Agrippa's own unresolved crisis was related to his

[100] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 321 n.100, flatly rejects the thesis. Reflecting on this disappointing "silence of historians" Zambelli sees it primarily as a methodological issue: it might be the consequence of "the great distance still existing between the history of philosophical thought and the history of religious ideas and movements in the sixteenth century"; see Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic*, 185.

[101] Nauert's view of Agrippa's magic as proto-science was criticized immediately after the publication of his book; see, for instance, Donald Weinstein, "Review on *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought* by Charles G. Nauert, Jr," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (Jan., 1967): 616–17. However, Nauert's notion of a "failed magus" has remained an influential idea in later scholarship: see Frank L. Borchardt, "The *Magus* as Renaissance Man," where the author postulates "virtually universal disappointment in magic expressed by the magicians themselves" (61).

[102] Noel Brann, "Review on *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought* by Charles G. Nauert, Jr," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Jan., 1967), 69–70.

futile attempts to "Christianize" both pagan Neoplatonic and medieval magic. Nauert shares Walker's view on the ultimately demonic nature of Agrippa's magic, but keeps insisting on his firm adherence to the Catholic church and its dogmas, thus strongly rejecting Zambelli's hypothesis about Agrippa's crypto-Protestantism. In this way Nauert's interpretation seems to deepen even further the German occultist's own split position since, on the one side, he speaks of the demonic character of Agrippa's "power-conferring, transitive magic," while on the other he claims that "Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* always stressed a mystical illumination of the soul."[103] Much like Walker, Nauert fails to explain what exactly is demonic about one's attempt to achieve this kind of illumination. He does point to the problematic Pelagian aspect of Agrippa's process of spiritual ascension, but Pelagianism was traditionally perceived as more heretical than demonic.[104] Nevertheless, Nauert's contribution is crucial in treating the issues such as the notion of the inwardness of religion in Agrippa, the origins and modes of his heterodoxy, and the religious and mystical components of his esoteric thought. In this context, Nauert stresses the paramount importance of an idea articulated by Marsilio Ficino and later embraced by Agrippa—that of a twofold revelation: "an open revelation contained in the words of Scripture and a secret revelation which interprets the published words in gnostic fashion."[105] In the final part of the present examination I refer to this idea as fundamental in my interpretion of Agrippa's religious thought.

Furthermore, Charles Nauert was decades ahead of some present-day scholars (such as Vittoria Perrone Compagni) in pointing that Agrippa could have resorted to a kind of intentional ambiguity in treating his topics, which would leave him room for exegetical freedom. In this way he laid ground for

[103] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 126.
[104] After all, in all the public attacks coming from the professional theologians of Agrippa's time (which took place in 1509, 1518, and in 1530) he was accused of heresy, not of necromancy. See Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 264–65.
[105] Nauert, "Magic and Skepticism in Agrippa's Thought," 168. See also Lewis Spitz's exhaustive review-discussion of Nauert's work for his treatment of patristic and early gnostic influences on Agrippa: Lewis W. Spitz, "Occultism and Despair of Reason in Renaissance Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (July–Sep., 1966): 464–69.

all the later interpretations that have sought to harmonize the two facets of Agrippa's thought epitomized by his two main works. Indeed, one could see Nauert's work as the starting point for the process of scholarly "Christianization" of Cornelius Agrippa that I mention in my introductory chapter.[106] In this way Nauert has done a lot to recast the Nettesheimer's role in the intellectual history of the sixteenth century by claiming for him the epithet of a Biblical or Christian humanist—an interpretation later taken over and developed particularly by Marc van der Poel.[107]

Finally, Nauert dedicates considerable attention to Agrippa's anthropology by discussing his "tripartite psychology," that is, the *idolum–ratio–mens* triad and the role of man's free will in the dynamics of this triad. Following Yates, he emphasizes Agrippa's indebtedness to Marsilio Ficino and Johan Reuchlin in developing this doctrine, even though the Nettesheimer never gave them credit for that (as he hardly ever openly referred to his contemporaries).

Present-day scholarship on Cornelius Agrippa has pushed the boundaries of research much further by making what I provisionally term a "linguistic turn," i.e. by recognizing in the German humanist an author sensitive to the various issues of discursive language and its applicability to magic. It appears that Nauert's emphasis on Agrippa's "intentional ambiguity" was instrumental in this regard. Certainly, the more important source of influence on modern scholars dealing with Agrippa has been the twentieth century critical theory with its plethora of approaches and "schools."

By linguistic turn I have in mind a gradual shift of scholarly attention from what Agrippa wrote

[106] See Nauert, *Agrippa*, 172–75. In the cited section one finds statements such as the one that Agrippa "never consciously broke with the old faith" (174). The conclusive evidence for my claim is Nauert's entry on Agrippa written for the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy just a few years prior to the scholar's death (which took place in 2013). In this essay he fully endorses the arguments of Vittoria Perrone Compagni concerning the inherent harmony of Agrippa's views and their decisively Christian character; see http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agrippa-nettesheim/ [last accessed: 11/11/2016].

[107] Thus in his Stanford Encyclopedia essay Nauert categorically states that "Agrippa wanted to encourage reform of the church and a deepening of spiritual life in ways typical of the reformist Christian humanism represented by Erasmus" (*ibid*.). This view has never been universally accepted among scholars. Lewis Spitz explicitly detaches Agrippa from the Christian humanism of Erasmian type based on *humana sapientia*; see Lewis W. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 273. In a much more recent scholarly publication dealing with Christian humanism the Nettesheimer is mentioned only *once* and almost incidentally: see Erica Rummel, ed., *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 121.

about to *how* he did it, in other words, from the content of his writings to the literary devices and rhetorical strategies he employed in shaping and articulating it. This change of perspective has opened up a number of new interpretive possibilities for some old dilemmas. For instance, the scrutiny of Agrippa's works from the viewpoint of literary genres has considerably reduced the previously perceived tension of his "contradictory" intellectual position. Thus by examining Agrippa's *De vanitate* as part of the well-established Renaissance literary genre of paradox, in which the author intentionally changes tonal registers and creates different authorial voices, Barbara Bowen downplays this old interpretive conundrum as a "false problem."[108] In a similar vein, Eugene Korkowski approaches this work as an example of mock-epideictic literature, showing that Agrippa's meticulous use of irony and other literary devices characteristic of Menippean satire helped articulate a multilayered, polyphonous message intended for various types of readers.[109] Michael Keefer analyzes Agrippa's apparently deliberate custom of misquoting his Biblical sources as a way of legitimizing his heterodox views by what appears to be verbal manipulation.[110] Chris Miles examines the Nettesheimer's famous retraction as an example of highly rhetoricized statement based on multiple authorial voices and consciously intended for different kinds of readers at the same time.[111]

The linguistic approach has found its most important contributions in the works of Marc van der Poel, Vittoria Perrone Compagni, and Christopher I. Lehrich. These scholars have significantly

[108] Barbara C. Bowen, "Cornelius Agrippa's *De Vanitate* : Polemic or Paradox?", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, T. 34, No. 2 (1972): 249–56, quote on 256.

[109] Eugene Korkowski, "Agrippa as Ironist," *Neophilologus* 60:4 (1976): 594–607. However, interpretations such as Bowen's and Korkowski's, although sensitive to the issues of language and genre, appear to limit humanist declamations to mere rhetorical exercises: see Marc van der Poel, "The Latin *Declamatio* in Renaissance Humanism," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 1989): 471–78. See also Keefer's critique of Bowen's approach in "Agrippa's Dilemma," 619.

[110] Keefer, "Agrippa's Dilemma," 640. To Keefer's examples of misquoting scriptural authorities one might add Agrippa's frequent use of re-contextualizing, as I demonstrated in Putnik, "To Be Born (Again) from God: Scriptural Obscurity as a Theological Way Out for Cornelius Agrippa," in *Obscurity in Medieval Texts*, ed. L. Doležalová, J. Rider, A. Zironi (Krems: Medium Aevum Quotidianum, 2013), 145–56.

[111] Chris Miles, "Occult Retraction: Cornelius Agrippa and the Paradox of Magical Language," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (2008), 433–56.

upgraded the scholarship on Agrippa by shifting their primary analytical focus from what the German humanist wrote about to how he did it. Instead of merely attempting to "reconstruct" Agrippa's *Weltanshauung*, they pay their attention to the literary genres he used (Van der Poel), his rhetorical strategies (Perrone Compagni), and the language of the works itself (Lehrich), thus further developing the new major fields for studying Renaissance esotericism in general: rhetoric, linguistics, discourse analysis, literary criticism.[112]

Marc van der Poel, a classical philologist and Neo-Latinist, makes a fundamental shift in the studies on Agrippa by approaching him not as a magician but solely as a Biblical humanist whose literary role models were those of classical antiquity (Cicero above all) and whose main concern was the reform of the crisis-stricken Christianity. Van der Poel examines several of Agrippa's works in relation to Ciceronian declamation and its reception in the Renaissance as a form of highly rhetoricized genre used at the time.

For Van der Poel, Agrippa was above all a theologian and exegete who detested the moral and intellectual climate prevailing in the Church heavily influenced by scholasticism. In its attempts to clarify the truths of religion by logical reasoning, scholastic theology confused the study of created things with the study of divine things. It relied on vain intellect instead of faith. For Agrippa, "theology is not only an intellectual activity, but also one that implies a spiritual and ethical vocation aimed at the discovery of the essence of God."[113] Instead of focusing on logic, which is applicable to created things, one should embrace the revelation formulated in Scripture by developing the attitude of faith and devotion, and thus reach the enlightenment of the mind (*illustratio mentis*). Instead of examining the Biblical text rationally, one should rather "project his thought into the realm of the divine, and allow

[112] These scholarly disciplines are certainly not new in themselves; what is really new is their application to the studies of Western esotericism.
[113] Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 55, referring to Agrippa's definition of theology in the *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum*, V.

himself to be guided by faith and spiritual devotion."[114] The sole purpose of theology should be to help man restore his original relationship with God.[115]

Van der Poel strongly emphasizes the genuineness of Agrippa's Christian self-identification and the sincerity of his submission to the Church.[116] For him, the Nettesheimer "was always scrupulous … as a Christian" and without any doubt "a Christian philosopher and theologian."[117] He does acknowledge the heterodox side of Agrippa's theological engagement, especially his "Neoplatonic way of thinking" and commitment to the *prisca theologia*, but does not see it as being in collision with the "Christian" side of Agrippa's thought. Throughout his work he maintains a conciliatory tone based on his conviction that the two facets of Agrippa's thought coexist in an almost perfect harmony.[118] Agrippa's theology, argues Van der Poel, "aims, through inductive reasoning, at securing the true meaning of the Word of God," but for such an exegesis he needed more than a dedicated, pious life and the authority of Scripture and the early Church fathers: he also needed "the confirmation of the correct meaning by authors considered to be worthy of authority."[119] And those authors are none other than the pagan Neoplatonists and Hermes Trismegistos, the supposed author of what we know as a corpus of late antique theosophical treatises. Agrippa incorporated these "external" authorities into his Biblical exegesis in order to "enrich" Christianity.[120]

One of the most important aspects of Van der Poel's interpretation is his view that Agrippa's

[114] Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 57–58.
[115] Significantly, Van der Poel brings up this crucial aspect of Agrippa theology as part of his Neoplatonic—not Christian—affiliation. He refers to Agrippa's *De homine*, where the author gave a digest of the "standard Neoplatonic anthropological notions," according to which the primordial man had existed "as an asexual (i.e. hermaphroditic), partly material and partly divine, being in direct relationship with God. As a result of Original Sin, the divine side of man, shaped by his affinity with God, was violated, and the harmony between the divinity and the earthliness of man was disturbed" (*Ibid*., 50).
[116] *Ibid.*, 135–37.
[117] *Ibid.*, 50, 267.
[118] E.g. "It is important to understand that the two areas of Agrippa's intellectual activities which seem contradictory to the twentieth-century mind were, for Agrippa, in fact closely connected with each other" (*Ibid*., 9) and many other such statements.
[119] *Ibid*., 11.
[120] This is exactly the word Van der Poel uses (*Ibid*., 25) referring to Agrippa's *Dehortatio gentilis theologiae*, where he pens the significant phrase *ecclesiam Dei locupletare* ("to enrich the Church of God"). In this treatise Agrippa also speaks about "cleaning up the pagan literature until it fits into Christian learning."

attack on all esoteric doctrines and his recantation in the *De vanitate* were, in fact, an attempt to defend "good magic" against all misinterpretations, abuses, and distortions of magical art.[121] And indeed, Van der Poel demonstrates that Agrippa did not recant his involvement in magic as such but merely "whatever erroneous opinions on magic he had expressed in this youthful writing" [i.e. the juvenile draft of the *De occulta philosophia*].[122] Even more importantly, he sees Agrippa's theory of magic as an integral part of his program of spiritual reform and the restoration of mankind's pristine closeness to God. In other words, *Agrippa's magic was an important element of his Christian self-identification*. Such an interpretation certainly blurs the contradictions between the *De vanitate* and *De occulta philosophia*.

Van der Poel rightly points out that Agrippa stressed an important difference between faith (*fides*) and reason (*ratio*), with each having its own field of application, but several problems arise with regard to this division which Van der Poel does not address. Why would someone guided by the principle of *sola fide* (as Agrippa presents himself in the *De vanitate*) feel the need to "enrich" the source of his *fides*? Next, is the borderline between *fides* and *ratio* as clear in Agrippa as Van der Poel suggests? To which of the two his magic belongs? It seems to embrace the elements of both. Finally, Agrippa's *fides* is faith in—*what exactly*? I suggest that the true object of his faith, putting aside the all-encompassing faith in God, remains somewhat murky.

These questions aside, Van der Poel provides a meticulous analysis of Agrippa's literary strategy and the ways he attempted to articulate his heterodox exegesis so as to be acceptable to his target audience. This is where the genre of *declamatio* comes into play. This genre perfectly matched Agrippa's conviction that scholars should have the right of freedom of opinion concerning subjects for

[121] Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 50–55.
[122] *Ibid*., 52. Referring to the key part of Agrippa's recantation, Van der Poel puts a proper emphasis on its true *object*: "Whatever mistakes I made in those books due to my youthful curiosity, I want now to retract since I have become more prudent" (*quidquid tunc per curiosam adolescentiam erratum est, nunc cautior palinodia recantatum volo*) (quote and reference on the same page; the translation is Van der Poel's).

which the Church did not formulate a universal doctrine. With its rhetorical conventions of contradiction and equivocation, it provided Agrippa with what he needed the most: a floor for open discussion, debate, and subtle persuasion.[123] Van der Poel concludes with a far-reaching remark:

> The *declamatio* is not a plain text in which abstract truths are formulated for an audience expected to absorb the text uncritically, but a complicated text, in which the writer puts forward and discusses, in the tradition of rhetorical *theses*, more than one point of view. The author wishes to appeal to the intellect and independent judgment of the reader.[124]

Vittoria Perrone Compagni has indebted the scholarship on Agrippa with two critical editions of his texts: that of *De occulta philosophia* (2000) and of *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* (2005).[125] Her edition of Agrippa's occult encyclopedia is widely praised among scholars for the meticulous work of collating the existing versions and identifying Agrippa's sources, many of which the German humanist did not bother to credit.[126]

However, Perrone Compagni's interpretive work is as equally important as her philological undertaking. Much like Van der Poel, she envisages Agrippa's involvement in magic as part of a much broader program of spiritual, religious, and cultural reform.[127] Moreover, she subscribes to her colleague's opinion that there is no true rift between the *De occulta philosophia* and the *De vanitate*. One in no way contradicts the other and a careful comparative analysis reveals "a comprehensive design, which englobed a cultural, religious and moral project for the reform of contemporary

[123] Here Van der Poel quotes an important passage from Agrippa's *Apologia adversus calumnias*: "The *declamatio* does not formulate a definitive judgment or a dogma. Instead, the propositions of the *declamatio* are alternately put in a deceiving or a straightforward way. Sometimes it voices my own opinion, sometimes those of others (…). It does not at all places declare my own ideas and it brings to the fore many invalid arguments, so that he who takes the counterpart will have something to reject and to refute" (Van der Poel, "The Latin *Declamatio*", 478; the translation is Van der Poel's).
[124] *Ibid*., 478.
[125] See notes 3 and 51 for the references. Prior to the critical edition of the *De occulta philosophia* scholars were mainly confined to Nowotny's annotated edition: *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, facsimile reprint of Cologne 1533 edition, ed. Karl Anton Nowotny (Graz: Akademische Druk-u. Verlagenstalt, 1967).
[126] The lonely voice in opposition to universal acclaim is that of Zambelli, who accused Perrone Compagni of plagiarizing her own unpublished critical edition of the *De occulta philosophia*; see Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic*, 186–87. In addition, Zambelli claims that Perrone Compagni never really consulted the Würzburg manuscript, otherwise she would have noticed that "the first version of 1510 was a text revised, completed and ready to be printed. Only Trithemius' prescription of initiatic silence caused a delay of more than twenty years before it was printed." The question that readily comes to mind is what made Agrippa eventually break his "initatic silence."
[127] See her "Introduction" to *DOP*, 15–50, for a detailed discussion of this view.

society."[128] What Agrippa condemns in the *De vanitate* is not *ratio* taken in its Ficinian sense, as a faculty submissive to the divine *mens*, but the Aristotelian *ratio* of the scholastics, which is steeped in the realm of senses and devoid of faith. The latter is the "*ratio* of the flesh" that needs to be dismantled as a prerequisite for the *restauratio magiae*, which is Agrippa's central idea.[129]

Significantly, Perrone Compagni terms this idea "the restoration of Christian magic."[130] But what would be the exact meaning of the qualifier "Christian" here? Does she have in mind a declarative allegiance to Christianity common to medieval grimoires? Far from that, Agrippa's magic serves a par excellence spiritual purpose: it is a means for renewing the relation between man and God, for returning to man's prelapsarian perfection. Once its original conceptual core is restored, magic is no longer a dangerous rival of faith but its powerful ally.[131] True magic—as opposed to its historical distortions—implies man's spiritual reform. It is the *operative* side of the believer's spiritual rebirth.[132] In claiming so she accepts Michael Keefer's emphasis on the notion of spiritual rebirth, but disagrees with him on its exact nature. Where Keefer notices a rift, Perrone Compagni recognizes unity, albeit a disguised one. Keefer sees Agrippa's involvement in esotericism as an impediment to the other, "spiritual" side of his pursuits, leading to unresolved and irresolvable ambiguities. Perrone Compagni directly links Agrippa's magic to a religious experience of deification and views it as being "upgraded to super-rational dimensions, thereby coinciding with man's attainment of religious perfection."[133] This

[128] Perrone Compagni, "*Dispersa intentio*," 161.
[129] Perrone Compagni thus rejects any notion of Agrippa's skepticism, referring to it as the "so-called skeptical crisis" and "alleged conversion to skepticism" (*ibid*., 168). Interestingly enough, she emphasizes that in 1529, when Agrippa's skeptical phase was supposed to be at its peak, he was engaged in an alchemical transmutation and even managed to produce a small quantity of gold (*ibid*., 168, referring to Agrippa's letter to a friend, *Epist.* VI, 56).
[130] Perrone Compagni, "*Dispersa intentio*," 161. See also her "Introduction" in *DOP*, 29, 49–50.
[131] Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo in Agrippa*, 13: "Si trattava di ripristinare il nucleo concettuale originario ... affinché la magia ... potesse essere nuovamente considerata una potente alleata della fede anziché una sua pericolosa concorrente."
[132] Perrone Compagni, "*Dispersa intentio*," 166 (italics mine). I emphasize the word "operative" as I consider it important for my later discussion of Agrippa's notions of faith and piety. It points to Reuchlin's idea of thaumaturgy and the much older Iamblichus' concept of theurgy as *integral* components of piety.
[133] *Ibid.,* 163.

implies nothing less than the conviction that one's atonement and salvation are directly related to magical operation! More precisely, Perrone Compagni maintains that man's deification *leads* to his possibility of performing magical operation, not vice versa. It is precisely deification that enables man, *upon* reaching the union with God, to "perform legitimate magical operations: the magical power, in short, is the result of assimilation to God, not the instrument for attaining it."[134]

In order to draw such a far-reaching conclusion, Perrone Compagni examines Agrippa's notion of magic from a decisively anthropological perspective and clears up the problem of discernment between *magia bona* and *magia mala*. In doing so she significantly upgrades Van der Poel's thesis that Agrippa in fact rejected only *magia mala* (Van der Poel does not provide any criteria for discernment between the two) and surpasses his clear-cut division between *fides* and *ratio*. Instead of looking for the criteria of discernment in the *content* of magical practice—which is what Marsilio Ficino did by attempting to legitimize natural magic—Agrippa focused on the operator's *intention* as the key factor for the *discretio spirituum*.[135] In the framework of Ficinian tripartite psychology of *mens*, *ratio*, and *idolum* that Agrippa adopted, *magia bona* implies orienting one's free reason towards the divine *mens* instead of turning it down to the earthly realm of *idolum*. This can be achieved only by means of faith, which is a "superior essence" that is "involved as a foundation and guarantee of a wider definition of magic that was to embrace all the areas of human knowledge and make them operative."[136] Perrone Compagni thus provides a more nuanced view on magic than Van der Poel, seeing it as a spiritual discipline based equally on reason and faith: *ratio* serves as the operative force guided by *fides*.

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[134] Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo in Agrippa*, 20 n.38: "La discussione sul furore si colloca nella rassegna di pratiche religiose che consentono all'uomo di raggiungere la congiunzione con Dio e quindi di esercitare, dopo la deificazione, operazioni magiche legittime: il potere magico, insomma, e` la conseguenza dell'assimilazione a Dio, non il suo strumento." Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 13–14, agrees with this conclusion, but it actually narrows down Agrippa's overall conception of magic to ceremonial or intellectual magic, leaving out other (admittedly lower) types of it. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, 217–20.

[135] *Ibid*., 169. See also Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo in Agrippa*, 13: what differentiates "good magic" from "bad" are not the means the magician utilizes but "his very internal orientation" (suo stesso orientamento interno) and "his attitude towards God" (suo atteggiamento nei confronti di Dio).

[136] Perrone Compagni, "*Dispersa intentio*,"163.

Finally, Perrone Compagni puts critical emphasis on Agrippa's *dispersa intentio*, that is, his intentionally fragmentary composition strategy designed with the purpose of spreading knowledge in disguise and to those who are worthy of it. In tune with Nauert's notion of intentional ambiguity and Van der Poel's insistence on the open, multilayered nature of declamation, Perrone Compagni maintains that Agrippa's habit of reinterpreting his sources results in producing entirely new contexts of meaning which are hidden "beneath a heap of quotations and borrowed matter."[137] In other words, his unsystematic exposition of ideas is "a precise theoretical choice" aimed at protecting the true knowledge from those unfit to obtain it.[138] She refers to the author's unusually straightforward confession made in the *De occulta philosophia*:

> Some of the notions are expounded in an orderly manner, others disorderly, others are fragmentary, yet others are hidden and entrusted to the research of those who are capable of comprehension […] Thus you, children of doctrine and knowledge, search the book with zeal and piece my dispersed intention together, since I have spread it in different parts: what in one place is concealed, in another is manifest, so that it may be revealed to you who are wise.[139]

Once this task is carried out, points out Perrone Compagni, one finds a coherent and unexpected structure: a consistent doctrine that aims at producing a renewed world, in which the transformation of matter through natural magic and the deification of man follow the same path.

In my view, Christopher I. Lehrich stands apart from the "religionist" perspective of Van der Poel and Perrone Compagni in that he is not interested in the problem of Agrippa's self-proclaimed orthodoxy and does not attempt to "Christianize" him more than he merits. However, Lehrich shares with these scholars the same basic assumption of the coherence and consistency of Agrippa's thought

[137] *Ibid*., 162.
[138] This effectively amounts to one of Wouter Hanegraaff's two principle aspects of esotericism: the notion of secrecy and a hidden knowledge reserved for the initiated elites; see the Introduction, 22 and n. 31.
[139] Perrone Compagni, "*Dispersa intentio*," 162, referring to *DOP* 599–600: *Horum autem quaedam cum ordine, quaedam sine ordine scripta sunt, quaedam per fragmenta tradita, quaedam etiam occultata et investigatione intelligentium relicta* […]. *Vos igitur, doctrinae et sapientiae filii, perquirite in hoc libro colligendo nostram dispersam intentionem, quam in diversis locis proposuimus: et quod occultatum est a nobis in uno loco, manifestum fecimus illud in alio, ut sapientibus vobis patefiat*. Significantly, the same section appears as a motto to Christopher Lehrich's *The Language of Demons and Angels*, which speaks of the central importance it holds in present-day Agrippan studies.

and finds the basis of that coherence in Agrippa's religious outlook. In that sense Steven vanden Broeke is right when he notes that "Lehrich's answer agrees well with the conclusions of Van der Poel's important study of Agrippa as a humanist theologian … that divine things also occupy central stage in the Agrippa's magical *De occulta philosophia*."[140]

However, there is a significant difference in approach. Lehrich is not interested in the humanist side of Agrippa's thought—or even in Agrippa himself as a historical person—but only in his theory of magic as delineated in his writings. Having set as his main goal to determine with more analytical precision the nature of Agrippa's magic, Lehrich moves beyond its classical definitions as proto-science, illicit religion, and social cleavage.[141] He maintains that "if there is to be any utility to the term 'magic'… it must be in some ways distinguishable from religion and science."[142] In order to extract this distinguishable characteristic, he approaches Agrippa's work from the perspective of critical theory and philosophy of language, relying especially on Jacques Derrida's notion of logocentrism, which confronts the acts of speech and writing and vindicates the latter from being ancillary to the former.[143] Thus the "linguistic turn" in Agrippa's studies reaches its peak with Lehrich's highly complex and original interpretation.

Lehrich's analysis is largely limited to the *De occulta philosophia*, with occasional brief references to the *De vanitate*. By examining the first book of the magical summa he shows that, unlike Ficino, Agrippa did not try to legitimize magic by referring to its "naturalness."[144] For the Nettesheimer, the dichotomy between natural and unnatural did not play a role in defining the licit magic since any such clear-cut distinction would be simply illusory. The basis for legitimizing magic,

[140] Steven vanden Broeke, Review, *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Summer 2005): 676–78.
[141] Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 3–11.
[142] *Ibid*., 9.
[143] *Ibid*., 18–24.
[144] *Ibid*., 63–66. In his analysis of Agrippa's natural magic Lehrich makes a number of important anthropological observations that I will refer to latter in my examination.

according to Agrippa, was the emanational character of the world: the fact that God makes Himself immanently present in the world and thus vivifies it both justifies and makes possible magical operation as an appropriate response of man-the-microcosm to the overall structure and potentials of the macrocosm: "Humans are divided into natural, celestial, and divine portions, in strict microcosm of the tripartite universe. (…) The body parts are subjects to various spheres, just as gold is subject to the Sun, and also like gold they are fundamentally part of the natural world. The mental and spiritual powers, however, are *of* the three spheres, not merely under their influence."[145] In other words, man is simultaneously natural, celestial, and super-celestial. In fact, his essence stretches all the way up to the realm of transcendence and he lays natural claim to divinity. This is why higher forms of magic, such as celestial and intellectual, are not only licit but *necessary* for the magus' project of ascension, as long as this project is inspired by the pious desire to regain one's lost prelapsarian status.

This is precisely why natural magic as advocated by Ficino is insufficient in itself and incapable of explaining itself: it lacks an external point of reference—"a divine point of reference [which] demands either a renunciative, apophatic mysticism, or some instance of a crossing, at which the divine becomes entirely natural, or the natural divine."[146] The common medium of magical operation is World Spirit, but its origin is divine: it is the emanated Word of God. This is an important point in Lehrich's interpretation since he views the skepticism of the *De vanitate* as pertaining only to the epistemological insufficiency of the natural world/natural magic. Once we move up the ladder and reach the levels of celestial and intellectual magic, the divine point of reference comes into sight more clearly. This is how Lehrich explains the underlying congruence between the *De vanitate* and *De occulta philosophia*.[147]

For Lehrich, the main problem which the author of *De occulta philosophia* tries to resolve is that of communication: How do the three levels of the world communicate with each other? How does

[145] *Ibid*., 61.
[146] *Ibid*., 92.
[147] *Ibid*., 92.

the emanated world communicate with the divine? Finally, how does man-the-microcosm communicate with the corresponding macrocosm and how does the magus utilize that communication? The question is thus eminently linguistic and Lehrich treats it as such. Having established that, in Agrippa's view, the foundation of divine–natural communication has been laid by the Incarnation of Christ—that is, Logos—he construes the world as a book given by God to the magus to read, but also to write upon and, ultimately, to interpret. In this scheme, Lehrich associates the lowest, natural world with speech in that the magus learns how to read and "pronounce" the natural, occult virtues imbibed with Logos.[148]

Surpassing the traditional notion of the world as the Book of Nature, Lehrich interprets the written signs of Agrippa's celestial magic as a sort of writing system independent of speech. He explores the nature of signification in the second book of the *De occulta philosophia* and extracts Agrippa's peculiar theory of language. By using magic squares, sigils, sacred names etc. the magus *writes a message* to the intermediary entity (an *intelligentia*, a demon), who is then obliged to join the act of communication and respond accordingly. The response becomes a corresponding action in the natural or any other of the three worlds. This is made possible by the nature of signs, which have an ontological connection with the objects signified. Due to their emanational origin, they are not arbitrary but *indexical* (here Lehrich refers to C. S. Pierce's triad of icon, index, and symbol), that is, the tie between signifier and signified is natural.[149] Hence he comes to a far-reaching conclusion:

> God speaks, and the world comes into being. Given this continuum and a Neoplatonic universe, all signs participate in the Divine to some degree. That is, every sign has some relation to the natural, celestial, or divine world, which by hierarchical participation requires that all signs ultimately participate in Divinity. Therefore, logically, all signs

[148] "[T]he natural magic is at heart a magic of logos, a magic bound up with the Incarnation, with the immanent, physical presence of God in the world, which grounds language in the material. The mathematical or celestial magic should, logically, be the magic of writing, and hence of Scripture" (*ibid*., 98).

[149] *Ibid*., 134–42. See also Francesco La Nave, Review, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Spring, 2005): 180–81. By insisting on the written character of Agrippa's celestial magic and the autonomy of written word Lehrich actually engages in a polemic with Stanley Tambiah's theory of magic as a spoken act bearing metaphorical meanings. It should be noted in general that Lehrich uses Agrippa's work as a testing ground for examining and contesting various aspects of modern theories of language. This greatly adds to the complexity of his interpretation.

> have ontological connections to their referents. Furthermore, the power of Divine expression is that it creates what is expressed, makes its meaning actual. By extension, all signs have this power, although in the vast majority of cases it is insufficient to create effects. By recognizing the different modes of signification, then adding them one to another, it is possible to make a sign more ontologically connected to its referent.[150]

The reason "why in the vast majority of cases it is insufficient to create effects" is the fallen state of man, which reflects in the fallen state of his language(s). Thus not only Hebrew but *all* other languages (and here Agrippa departs from Pico and Reuchlin) arise from divine providence and are initially not arbitrary. The degree of their subsequent arbitrariness corresponds to the degree of the fall of those who use them (and in this regard Hebrew is the least affected and therefore the most powerful).[151] The magus' task is to penetrate the arbitrariness of language and restore it to the original state in which it can be utilized for communication with the Divine. Thus the magus, in Lehrich's perspective, becomes a hermeneutist whose main goal is to master the original language of the world. The expected result in reaching that goal is the magus' liberation from the fallen state.

The last interpretation I take into consideration here is Wouter Hanegraaff's. A series of his recent essays on various Renaissance syncretists marks a radical departure from Frances Yates' thesis that Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* forms the basis of Renaissance magic and esotericism, at least in Agrippa's and Lazzarelli's case.[152] Hanegraaff downgrades Ficino's influence on two grounds: 1) Ficino missed the central message of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which is that of attaining *gnosis*, or superior divine knowledge; and 2) there was another prominent Renaissance syncretist who *did* understand that message properly and convey it in his translations of *CH* XVI–XVIII (chapters not included in Ficino's *Pimander*), and that was Lodovico Lazzarelli. Finally, it was

[150] Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 141.
[151] *Ibid*., 135.
[152] After his and Ruud M. Bouthoorn's monograph on Lodovico Lazzarelli (see note 49), Hanegraaff dedicated a number of essays to Marsilio Ficino and the *Corpus Hermeticum*, e.g., "Altered States of Knowledge: The Attainment of Gnōsis in the Hermetica," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 2 (2008): 129–33; "Under the Mantle of Love. The Mystical Eroticisms of Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno," in: Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds.), *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2008): 175–207, etc.

Lazzarelli who influenced Agrippa's understanding of the *Hermetica* more than Ficino did.[153] Contrary to a common misunderstanding, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, argues Hanegraaff, has nothing to do with magic; it concentrates entirely on the philosophical quest for *gnosis*, the knowledge of one's self and of God, which leads to spiritual regeneration. This quest can be seen as "a process of initiation into successively 'higher' levels of knowledge and bodily/spiritual transformation that went far beyond rational philosophy and discursive language."[154] Supernatural powers come only as the result of attaining *gnosis*—as an indicator, so to speak, that man has regained his prelapsarian status and come to share in the essence of the divinity.

Ficino's translation, claims Hanegraaff, marginalized and obscured the emphasis on *gnosis* with these specific religious connotations. On the other hand, Lazzarelli's interpretation (layed down in his translation of the three chapters and in his main work, the *Crater Hermetis*), focusing on spiritual regeneration that leads to *gnosis*, is crucial for understanding Agrippa's religious perspective as presented in the *De occulta philosophia*, as well as for his theory of magic.[155]

Hanegraaff focuses on Agrippa's Italian period by conducting a close textual analysis of his "anthropological" treatises and the introductory speech to his now lost lectures on Ficino's *Pimander* in Pavia (*Oratio habita Papiae in praelectione Hermetic Trismegisti De Potestate et Sapientia Dei*). He also takes into account both versions of the *De occulta philosophia* and notes that already in the

[153] Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 3–5. Moreover, the problem with Ficino's translation turns out to be much bigger than missing the central point. As Hanegraaff demonstrates in another article, "How Hermetic was Renaissance Hermetism," *Aries – Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 15 (2015): 179–209, in addition to Ficino's apparently misunderstanding much of the Hermetic message, the first edition of the *Pimander* (1471) "turns out to be corrupt in many crucial respects, leading to a long series of defective editions that obscured the actual contents of the *Corpus Hermeticum* for Renaissance readers" (179). Hanegraaff bases this conclusion on the meticulous critical edition and philological analysis of the *Pimander* by Maurizio Campanelli, *Mercurii Trismegisti Pimander sive De Potestate et Sapientia Dei* (Torino: Nino Aragno, 2011).

[154] Hanegraaff, "How Hermetic was Renaissance Hermetism," 187.

[155] It was already Perrone Compagni who, especially in her critical edition of the *De triplici ratione*, showed the extent to which Agrippa—usually tacitly—relied on Lazzarelli. Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 15, conjectures that Agrippa might have come in closer contact with Lazzarelli's work through his friend Symphorien Champier, who met Lazzarelli's spiritual teacher Giovanni "Mercurio" da Correggio in 1501.

juvenile draft one finds the Hermetic/Lazzarellian idea of converting mind into God, passing into the nature of God, and thus acquiring the superior knowledge granted to the divinized man. The final version goes even step further and refers to "a unique and very daring thesis" of the *Crater Hermetis*, that of the regenerated man's participation in God's power of creation, a power to *create souls*.[156] This power, however, is granted solely to the Christian hermetist, who is able to go beyond Hermes' wisdom and recognize in the personality of Poimandres none other than Jesus Christ.

In a nutshell: according to how Lazzarelli interprets the *Corpus Hermeticum* (and how Agrippa takes over his interpretation), there is *no true ontological difference between God the creator and the created soul*, and this is the only way to explain man's divine potentials such as the power to create souls.[157] Agrippa's anthropological treatises and the Pavian *Oratio* confirm his adherence to Lazzarelli. In the *Oratio* he speaks about "the knowledge of ourselves, the ascent of the intellect, arcane prayers, the unity with God, and the sacrament of regeneration."[158] He also adopts Lazzarelli's extraordinary and bold conviction that Poimandres from *CH* I is actually Jesus Christ.[159]

The case of the *Dialogus de homine* is interesting in itself as this dialogue, in addition to relying on the above-delineated ideas, brings forth a curious anthropological distinction: the image of God is not the soul but *man as an integrated being* consisting of both body and soul.[160] This distinction, expressed in such a straightforward manner and closely approaching the monist anthropology of the Church, is quite unusual for Agrippa and merits further comparative analysis. The *De homine* also closely paraphrases the *Crater Hermetis* on the question of man's fall: it is a well-known narrative of

[156] Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 9. Agrippa's detailed treatment of these Lazzarellian ideas can be found in chapter III 36 of the 1533 edition.
[157] *DOP* 513, III 36: "it is a literal generation in which the son is like the father in all manner of similitude, and in which the begotten is the same in species as the begetter" (*est autem univoca generatio, in qua filius est patri similis omnimoda similitudine et in qua genitum secundum speciem idem est cum generante*). As Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 12, points out, this is a close paraphrase from the *Crater Hermetis*, 25.4.
[158] *Oratio habita Papiae*, ed. Paola Zambelli in Eugenio Garin et al., *Testi umanistici su l'ermetismo* (Rome: Fratelli Bocca, 1955), 124, quoted in Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 14.
[159] *Oratio habita Papiae*, ed. Zambelli, 125, quoted in Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 14.
[160] Agrippa, *De homine*, 50v–51r, ed. Zambelli, 299, quoted and discussed in Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 18–19.

the primordial man as a being with a double nature: a divine and an immortal one, and a bodily and a mortal one.[161] The body was mortal but inhabited by the divine light, as long as man was in harmony with God. Due to man's transgression the light withdrew, and the body became subject to corruption.[162] "The implication," concludes Hanegraaf, "is that Agrippa systematically juxtaposed two kinds of 'generation': a carnal one leading to death, and a spiritual one leading to immortality."[163] One wonders, however, how this image fits the monist anthropological perspective mentioned in the above lines.

Among a number of observations in Hanegraaff's interpretation one merits special attention: it is his thesis that Agrippa's *magia*, in essence, amounts to the third and highest type of magic discussed in the *De occulta philosophia*.[164] This means that Hanegraaff equates Agrippa's intellectual magic with the theosophical quest for *gnosis* as expounded by the author of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and Lazzarelli, as opposed to the lower types of magic such as astral and natural. The difference, then, is that of kind, not of degree. I discuss this issue at length in Chapters Four and Five.

MAPPING A NO-MAN'S LAND: HOW TO APPROACH AN ESOTERIC AUTHOR?

Now that I have given a basic overview of the several most important contributions to Agrippan studies, I move on to a discussion of my own approach. Certainly, I base a considerable part of my analysis on some of the above-delineated theses and conclusions. Somewhere between the painstaking archival and philological work of Nauert and Perrone Compagni, and the complex theoretical examinations of Lehrich, I propose a more narrowly oriented examination that should clarify some aspects of Agrippa's anthropology vis-à-vis his religious self-identification.

[161] *Ibid*., 19–20.
[162] In another anthropological treatise, the *De originali peccato*, Agrippa claims that the original sin consisted of the sexual intercourse. This will be a subject of detailed analysis in Chapter Five.
[163] Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 20.
[164] *Ibid.*, 13–14, 23–24. As I discuss in Chapter Five, this view influences the way in which Hanegraaff understands the relation between magical miracle-working and deification.

As already indicated in the Introduction, dealing with Agrippa's writings in the proposed way requires the following methodological steps: 1) a detailed, narrowly focused philological examination of his works in search of all the relevant *loci* pertaining to the above-listed anthropological themes; 2) a discourse analysis and interpretation of the acquired data with the aim of elucidating Agrippa's anthropological views within the broader context of his theory of magic as well as his professed allegiance to Christianity.

How to read Agrippa?

It has often been stated that Cornelius Agrippa's frequent changes of authorial voices and his shifting opinions resulted in a highly inconsistent, at times even unintelligible text.[165] The readers appear to be faced with a recurring necessity to choose *which* Agrippa they are dealing with: the magus, the skeptic, the Erasmian Christian, the humanist with sympathies for the Protestants, etc. Does the author exhibit even a minimum of intellectual coherence to be analyzed in a meaningful way? Is it possible to avoid all those easy solutions that explain away his literary and intellectual inconsistencies as coming from an undecided, perplexed, intellectually unsound or simply dishonest personality (the "Thorndikean" paradigm)? On the other hand, is it possible to resist a tendency to impose harmony and system on Agrippa's worldview at all costs, to read them into his works to a much greater extent than the texts themselves justify, to project consistency into all aspects of Agrippa's thought? I believe the answer to all these questions is a careful yes, provided that one relies on the most important results of present-day scholarship on Agrippa, but without expecting a necessary *coniunctio oppositorum* at the end of the road.

As shown above, the common thread of all the "linguistic" approaches to Agrippa's work is the assumption that he did not see language as founded on the notions of fixity and identity and that

[165] See Michael Keefer's remark quoted on p. 36, where he speaks of Agrippa's verbal and doctrinal "violent oscillations."

consequently each of his texts can be viewed, to put it in Chris Miles's words, as "a complex and bewildering matrix of authorial tones and implied (or invoked) readers that are presented in cross-conversation with each other."[166] What follows is that Agrippa's language reaches metalingustic levels where the very structure of his works, the alteration of authorial voices, the skillful use of the shifting nature of discourse often serve to point the reader to *something other* or *more* than the plain text suggests. In other words, I read Agrippa with an eye on Nauert's notion of "intentional ambiguity," Van der Poel's insistence on his rhetorical subtlety, and Perrone Compagni's emphasis on *dispersa intentio*.

With this conceptual framework in mind, I propose the above-mentioned twofold methodological approach. The first step consists in a close reading of the selected paragraphs. As classical philologist, I am particularly interested in the lexical and semantic aspects of the proposed topic, in Agrippa's terminological choices and the meanings with which he loads the chosen terms, especially with regard to his sources of references, both synchronic and diachronic.[167] My own application of "close reading" implies a broader, theoretically less loaded meaning of the term in contrast to the specialized analytical tool introduced by adherents to the so-called New Criticism, who advocate the semantic autonomy of text.[168] I do not fully subscribe to the view that the "real author's intention" can be easily disposed of, although I also do not think that the text alone can lead the reader to the absolute reconstruction of the "true meaning" intended by the author.

It might be argued that the "close reading" of single sentences or paragraphs—taken in its more "ordinary" form as a traditional philological word-by-word examination—is a methodologically

[166] Miles, "Occult Retraction," 444.
[167] Admittedly, this level of analysis has its limitations: as Jonathan Z. Smith notes, "[g]iving primacy to native terminology yields, at best, lexical definitions which, historically and statistically, tell how a word is used. But, lexical definitions are almost always useless for scholarly work. To remain content with how 'they' understand 'magic' may yield a proper description, but little explanatory power." Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," quoted in Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 10.
[168] For a comprehensive discussion, with accompanying references, on the concept of close reading of the New Critics and its implications for the study of ancient texts see Thomas A. Schmitz, *Modern Literary Theory and Ancient Texts. An Introduction* (Malden, Ma: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 91–94.

backward approach similar to the methods of the traditional Christian exegesis. However, I start off with an assumption that each word in Agrippa's works is a result of a carefully planned scheme and a meticulous selection revealing different authorial voices and at least hinting at the positions of the projected (if not the real) author. The textual history of Agrippa's works seems to confirm my assumption: in the case of the *De occulta philosophia*, for instance, it took him more than twenty three years to bring his manuscript to the printing press, and those were not simply idle years, but periods in which Agrippa constantly reread, rewrote, and rearranged the whole text. In tune with Wouter Hanegraaff, I see a careful philological analysis as a necessary prerequisite for establishing any interpretive model that would apply to a complex and subtle *homo literatus* as Cornelius Agrippa certainly was.[169]

Difficulties of interpretation

Although reading already implies interpreting, a scholarly work, of course, requires a final, logical, and coherent articulation of the offered interpretation. One needs to choose a bag from which to pull out one's scholarly labels. This second methodological step presents even more serious problems than the first. Once it comes to interpreting the collected data, the question arises as to which discipline is best applicable to such a complex and disparate author, who has been largely marginalized by the traditionally established branches of history. In this regard, in a somewhat apophatic manner, I first ought to clarify what the present examination is *not* about.

Agrippa's own all-inclusive definition of magic as his principal field of interest is not particularly helpful in formulating the conceptual framework of my analysis. He views it as a "science"

[169] See Hanegraaff, "Altered States of Knowledge," 129–33. Speaking about "erudite textual criticism and philology, on a basis of essentially descriptive historiography" he also warns of the dangers of misunderstanding such an approach by taking it as "a quasi-positivist doctrine of descriptivism."

(*perfectissima, summaque scientia*) and a "philosophy" (*altior sanctiorque philosophia*),[170] but it does not, of course, qualify his doctrines as strictly belonging either to the domain of the history of science or the history of philosophy as present-day scholarly disciplines. The former was definitely ruled out as a relevant scholarly field with the fall of the so-called "Yates thesis,"[171] whereas the latter has only a limited scope when applied to Agrippa. As Lehrich points out, both disciplines are to a considerable extent marked by a teleological orientation, that is, they tend to "treat an author's thought in terms of the disciplines which ultimately emerged from the lineage in which that author participated."[172] Against such a stern criterion, Agrippa's work undoubtedly falls short of being relevant in either field.[173]

Nevertheless, the history of philosophy remains an important conceptual framework as long as one keeps in mind that the "blind alley" of the Renaissance syncretism relied on important philosophical concepts inherited from the antiquity and the Middle Ages. For example, it would be difficult to analyze Agrippa's views on man without taking into account Plato's intermediary gods in the *Timaeus* or various ideas that Fritz Graf calls the "theological turn" of late antique philosophy.[174] Or, it is well known that some of the Renaissance esotericists, such as Pico della Mirandola, took more or less active part in the debates on the differences between Plato and Aristotle that gushed out in the

[170] Agrippa, *DOP*, 86. The author uses the term *scientia* not simply as denoting "knowledge"—which is the ordinary meaning of the word in Classical Latin—but rather "science," as evident from his usage of the word in the *De vanitate scientiarum*. In his occult encyclopedia too Agrippa treats magic as a full-fledged *scientific discipline* encompassing elements of physics, botany, meteorology etc., just as he consistently links *magia naturalis* to—or even equates it with—natural philosophy.

[171] See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 325–27. He notes, however, that "it has now become quite normal for historians of science to discuss topics like alchemy, astrology, and natural magic" (quote on 327). Yet, this type of interest is insufficient in studying the religious dimensions of Agrippa's esotericism, which is the focal point of my dissertation.

[172] Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 12.

[173] Concerning the history of philosophy as a proper framework for studying Agrippa, one might add Cassirer's insightful remark that the spiritual essence of the Renaissance did not primarily reflect in its philosophy, but rather in the syncretistic religious assumptions as well as the philological and artistic concerns of the epoch; see Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, tr. Mario Domandi (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2000), 1–2.

[174] Fritz Graf, "Magic II: Antiquity" in: Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 721.

fifteenth century,[175] even though Agrippa's own numerous debates, as I showed in the biographical section, had much more to do with theology than philosophy proper.

However, in coping with an author as eclectic as Agrippa not even theology is entirely applicable. Many aspects of his thought, such as his numerous exegetical attempts, fall within the scope of this discipline, while many others (to mention only alchemy or ceremonial magic) evidently cross its boundaries and require a more interdisciplinary approach even when they go hand in hand with theological considerations.

Such an approach is provided by religious studies as a multidisciplinary academic field comprising disciplines as divergent as cultural anthropology, sociology, psychology, and intellectual history with their particular methodologies. The need for such a cross-disciplinary perspective can best be illustrated by the example of Agrippa's *De vanitate*. In any attempt to interpret this puzzling work one has to take into account many different aspects and layers of the problem: Agrippa's religious convictions and philosophical attitudes, his literary role models and main sources of influence (in this particular case Erasmus and Giovani Francesco Pico della Mirandola), his personal circumstances at the time of writing (poverty, disillusionment, anger), the various aspects of patronage (even a failed one, as in the case of Louise de Savoy), the humanist literary and rhetorical vogues and strategies such as self-fashioning, love of irony and literary paradox, etc.

As already discussed in the Introduction,[176] I believe that Agrippa's thought and work can be efficiently examined in the conceptual framework of the academic study of Western esotericism as a newly developed branch of religious studies. This field provides a cross-disciplinary approach which takes into account all those liminal areas of intellect and spirituality that lie in the murky space between

[175] For a detailed discussion on this see S. A. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West. Pico's 900 Theses (1486). The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems* (Tempe, Arizona: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1998), 1–58.
[176] See Introduction, 20–28.

religion, philosophy, art, science, and other major fields of human thought and creativity. Thus a number of apparently disparate phenomena in Agrippa, when examined within the conceptual framework of the study of Western esotericism, exhibit some similarities and discernable patterns. They can be usefully described by the classical taxonomic definition of esotericism given by Antoine Faivre, one of the "fathers" of the modern scholarship of Western esotericism. According to Faivre, there are several characteristics common to what he terms "esoteric spirituality" in contrast to other modes of spirituality: 1) *The doctrine of correspondences*; 2) *The idea of living nature*; 3) *Imagination and mediations* (as the means for both "vertical" and "horizontal" communication); 4) *The experience of transmutation* (i.e. personal transformation); 5) *The practice of concordance* (a search for similarities between various esoteric traditions with the idea of reaching a single, universal point of divine revelation), and 6) *Transmission* (the principle of handing down the esoteric knowledge through a disciplic succession and initiation).[177] Faivre considers the first four criteria as necessary for defining esotericism, and he adds the last two as secondary. Except for point four, all these features are evident and amply documented in Agrippa's works. In Chapters Four and Five of this thesis I emphasize—in tune with Perrone Compagni and some other Agrippan scholars discussed above—that the idea of personal transformation also played a prominent role in his thought.

And yet, despite the basic congruity of his main ideas, Agrippa's shifting authorial voices and modes of argumentation, as well as a perplexing chronology of his publicly articulated attitudes, pose significant problems for interpreting his work. What complicates matters further is the complexity of the spiritual traditions—or "traditions"—he relied upon. Speaking of the problems with the partly corrupt and misleading Ficino's 1471 translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Wouter Hanegraaff

[177] Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), 3–47. Faivre's definition has been contested from the various points of view and more or less discarded as a valid scholarly definition, but it is still quite useful as a *description* of the main traits of Renaissance esotericism. Critics question the universality of Faivre's criteria and see them as theoretical generalizations.

somewhat downheartedly concludes that "it cannot be said that the transmission and reception of the *Hermetica* resulted in a 'tradition' in any meaningful sense of the word. We are then left with only a Renaissance *discourse* about Hermes."[178]

However, this is exactly my position regarding Agrippa and his treatment of the spiritual traditions he built into his synthesis. I examine precisely *Agrippa's discourse* on Christianity, Platonism, Hermetism, etc. as it can be easily misleading to examine his doctrinal synthesis without taking into account this aspect of the problem. For instance, when I analyze the role of Pauline Christianity in his thought, I view it as entirely determined by the way *he read* St. Paul; any other way would hardly make any sense in light of Agrippa's aberrations from what was considered the orthodox interpretation of the Pauline theology. The same goes for his readings of translated works, whether the translations were faithful to the original or flawed: both affected his own understanding of the issues involved.[179]

As is well-known from the twentieth century literary theory, the act of reading is a complex process of reception and production in which the reader is not a passive receiver of the predetermined meaning of the text. Instead, readers actively form—or reformulate—the meaning by building into their interpretation a whole set of presumptions and convictions. What grants the reader such a "power" is what Wolfgang Iser terms the "empty places" in the text, which leave it in the state of interpretive indeterminacy and "invite" the reader to fill in the "blank space."[180] I will argue that this kind of textual ambiguities—Van der Poel calls them "the uncertainties of the revelation" and considers them the main

[178] Hanegraaff, "How Hermetic was Renaissance Hermetism," 2. See note 153. Hanegraaff refers to Maurizio Campanelli's discovery of serious shortcomings in Ficino's original translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. In this regard, I analyzed the way in which Ficino completely misinterpreted Plato's *Ion* and came to the conclusion that one can only speak of Ficino's *discourse about* Platonism: see Noel Putnik, "*Plato Ficinianus*: jedan renesansni primer recepcionističke kritike" [*Plato Ficinianus*: A Renaissance Example of Reader-Response Criticism], *Lucida Intervalla, A Journal of Classical Studies*, Vol. 43 (2014): 165–94.

[179] This is why, when examining Agrippa's use of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, I also rely on Maurizo Campanelli's critical edition of Ficino's problematic translation.

[180] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 34–38.

area of Agrippa's theological interests[181]—was particularly productive for Agrippa's exegesis.

With all this in mind, I proceed now to the analysis of the cosmic scenery in which the Agrippan man appears and takes on his or her role as a divinely empowered microcosm.

[181] See Introduction, 20 n. 22.

CHAPTER TWO

SETTING THE COSMOLOGICAL SCENE: *HOMO MINOR MUNDUS*

It is no exaggeration to say that Agrippa's notion of man depends almost entirely on, or is intrinsically connected to, his understanding of the cosmos. In the first book of *De occulta philosophia* one reads that "man's nature is the most complete image of the whole universe, containing in itself the whole heavenly harmony" (*humana natura ... sit totius universi completissima imago, in seipsa omnem continens harmoniam*).[182] This idea of the *microcosmos in macrocosmo*, fairly common in the Renaissance, gained particular importance in Agrippa's thought as it provided a necessary conceptual backup for his doctrine of spiritual ascension. In other words, human nature as conceived by the Nettesheimer cannot be fully comprehended independently of man's position and participation in the universe. It is therefore necessary to pay some attention to Agrippa's understanding of the *macrocosmos* before moving on to the scrutiny of his anthropological views *stricto sensu*. In this chapter I examine some crucial cosmological concepts adopted and developed by the German humanist by going through those primary sources that offer some insight into this matter. It will come as no surprise that the main target of my analysis is Agrippa's occult encyclopedia, which remains the most elaborate exposition of his philosophical tenets. One finds very few direct reflections on cosmology and cosmogony in the other works considered in this thesis.[183]

THE UNIVERSE OF THE *DE OCCULTA PHILOSOPHIA*

The *De occulta philosophia* is the largest, most important, and most complex among Cornelius

[182] I 33, *DOP* 148, Tyson 102.
[183] Parts of this chapter appear in my text "Agrippa's Cosmic Ladder: Building a World with Words in the *De Occulta Philosophia*," in *Lux in Tenebris. The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism*, ed. Peter J. Forshaw (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 81–102.

Agrippa's works. It is a summa of virtually all the esoteric doctrines and magical practices accessible to the author. As is well known and discussed in scholarship, this vast and diverse amount of material is organized within a tripartite structure that corresponds to the common Neoplatonic notion of a cosmic hierarchy. Thus the first book deals with natural magic corresponding to the physical realm, the second with astral or mathematical magic corresponding to the celestial realm, and the third with ceremonial or ritual magic corresponding to the intellectual realm of the created world.[184] Each of these three parts embraces a number of doctrines and practices coming from different esoteric traditions—ranging from late Hellenistic Neoplatonism and Hermetism through medieval magic and Kabbalah to the doctrines of Florentine Neoplatonists and Christian Kabbalists—which Agrippa expounds and interconnects according to his hierarchical scheme. As already discussed above, the final form and the content of this work are the result of a long and complex creative process: one should remember that the juvenile draft Agrippa presented to the abbot Trithemius in 1510 differs greatly from the final version published in 1533. The former is considerably shorter and even structured differently.[185] Certainly, it is quite difficult to analyze such a work from the viewpoint of consistency if one has in mind more than two decades of revising and rewriting the text, with an ever increasing body of both acknowledged and unacknowledged sources Agrippa relied upon. This diachronic aspect of Agrippa's cosmological and anthropological observations needs to be addressed with particular care.

It is often (perhaps too often) stated that this monumental synthesis is neither an original contribution to the study of magic nor a practical manual. A considerable body of modern scholarship

[184] The cosmological aspects of the *De occulta philosophia* have been extensively analyzed in scholarship: see, for instance, Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 90–96; Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, 146–60; Nauert, *Agrippa*, 220–59; Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 36–42; Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 110–20, etc. Hermann F. W. Kuhlow has dedicated his entire doctoral thesis to Agrippa's cosmology and its religious implications: see Kuhlow, *Die Imitatio Christi und ihre kosmologische Überfremdung. Die theologischen Grundgedanken des Agrippa von Nettesheim* (Berlin und Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1967).

[185] The juvenile version is preserved in its original form at the University Library of Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, ms. M.ch.q.50. For a discussion on the differences between the two editions see Perrone Compagni's Introduction, *DOP* 1–59. Pages 54–59 offer a particularly valuable table of comparison between the 1533 published edition and the 1510 manuscript.

has not done justice to the Nettesheimer's legacy in viewing him simply as an encyclopedist and compiler who, to use Christopher Lehrich's words, "merely collected odd bits of obscure knowledge and fantasy."[186] Following Lehrich and some other of the above-mentioned scholars, I maintain that behind the compilatory structure of the *De occulta philosophia* one can detect the work of a considerably coherent thinker and a relatively creative exegete. The weight of Agrippa's interpretation is precisely in providing an all-encompassing cosmological and theological framework for what had reached his time as a jumble of heterodox philosophies, odd practices, obscure beliefs, superstition, and strange literary reminiscences.

The opening sentence

The main intention of the author of the *De occulta philosophia* is to rehabilitate and re-establish magic in its original, incorrupt form, as Agrippa declares in a letter to Trithemius attached to the first book of his work.[187] He views magic as the most sublime ancient form of philosophy and religion which had degenerated due to the misuse and ignorance of those who applied it. It is now his task to vindicate the honorable name of magic and make it acceptable to the general Christian public if not to the Church itself. In order to do this, it is not enough merely to catalog all the existing forms of magic and separate the authentic from the false; one needs to put magic into a broader philosophical and theological context within which one should be able to prove the genuine value and purpose of magic. Certainly, Agrippa had predecessors in this enterprise; to mention Marsilio Ficino is enough for the moment. However, what differentiates Agrippa from his predecessors is the scope as well as the daring of his vindication of magic.

What then would be the lost original purpose of that "sublime ancient philosophy" according to Agrippa? In the very first sentence of his *De occulta philosophia* he answers that question and

[186] Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 214.
[187] *DOP* 68–71, Tyson liii–lv. The letter is dated April 8, 1510.

delineates a magical program that he develops in the rest of the work:[188]

> Seeing that there is a threefold world, elementary, celestial, and intellectual, and that every inferior is governed by its superior and receives the influence of the virtues thereof, so that the very original and chief Worker of all does by angels, heavens, stars, elements, animals, plants, metals, and stones convey from himself the virtues of his omnipotence upon us, for whose service he made and created all these things, wise men conceive it no way irrational that it should be possible for us to ascend by the same degrees through each world, to the same very original world itself, the Maker of all things and First Cause, from whence all things are and proceed, and also to enjoy not only these virtues which are already in the more excellent kind of things, but also besides these, to draw new virtues from above.
>
> *Cum triplex sit mundus, elementalis, coelestis et intellectualis, et quisque inferior a superiori regatur ac suarum virium suscipiat influxum ita ut ipse Archetypus et summus Opifex per angelos, coelos, stellas, elementa, animalia, plantas, metalla, lapides, Suae omnipotentiae virtutes exinde in nos transfundat, in quorum ministerium haec omnia condidit atque creavit, non irrationabile putant magi nos per eosdem gradus, per singulos mundos, ad eundem ipsum archetypum mundum, omnium opificem et primam causam, a qua sunt omnia et procedunt omnia, posse conscendere: et non solum his viribus quae in rebus nobilioribus praeexistunt frui posse, sed alias praeterea novas desuper posse attrahere.*[189]

The importance of this somewhat too complicated sentence cannot be overstated; with just a little bit of exaggeration, one might even say that the rest of the *De occulta philosophia* is but a huge commentary on this single sentence. If it is broken into a more user-friendly, comprehensible form, its crucial elements begin to surface more clearly:

> Seeing that there is *a threefold world*, elementary, celestial, and intellectual, and that every inferior is governed by its superior and *receives the influence of the virtues thereof* ... wise men conceive it no way irrational that it should be possible for us *to ascend by the same degrees through each world*, to the same very original world itself.[190]

It is essential to notice here that the sentence in the original opens with a causal *cum*, which determines

[188] Here I give a slightly modified version of James Freake's 1651 translation. Wherever I consider it necessary or desirable for the sake of clarity, I insert my modifications based on the Latin original.
[189] I 1, *DOP* 85, Tyson 3.
[190] Italics mine. Just in passing, note the interesting way James Freake chose to render the Latin *magi* as "wise men." Note also that Freake's verb *ascend* corresponds to the Latin *conscendere*. One is tempted to speculate that Agrippa was careful not to use the theologically more loaded form *ascendere*.

the logical perspective of the whole sentence: "*since* there is a threefold world."[191] The opening word is thus undoubtedly a deliberate choice. In addition to explaining the core concept of the work, it can also be interpreted as carrying a covert apologetic intention: the fact that the world is created in such a manner that it enables the way back up the ladder vindicates the magus from the accusations that his spiritual project is a transgression of the divine rules. The author is also particularly keen to emphasize that the created world is not static and uniform: "every inferior is governed by its superior and receives the influence of the virtues thereof" means that the three postulated worlds are structured hierarchically as a result of the process of divine emanation.[192] The "chief Worker of all," "the Maker of all things and First Cause"—that is, God—does not merely *create* the world; he *invests it* with his divine presence and omnipotence which flow down continuously through the created chain of beings, starting from angels and stars and ending with metals and stones.[193] God's divine virtues are distributed vertically, in such a manner that every preceding level of creation rules the one below. Agrippa sees this outpouring of God's essence—or at least his virtues if not the essence—as a *natural* process, which then leaves the way back to the Godhead also naturally open. This is emphasized by the important words *non irrationabile,* which conceal, *in nuce*, a philosophical justification and defense of magic confronted with the inimical and suspicious mainstream theology. The magician (not Freake's euphemistic "wise man") perceives this whole process of natural emanation and comes to an utterly rational conclusion that it is possible to climb back to transcendence by using the same cosmic ladder. Thus Agrippa proclaims the main goal of his magic: to return to the One from whom all things proceed and to share

[191] On causal *cum* see LS 495, II B.
[192] As indicated by Perrone Compagni, *DOP* 86, Agrippa's notion of *triplex mundus* comes directly from Pico's *Heptaplus* and Reuchlin's *De arte cabbalistica*. The same doctrine of *unus mundus in tres particulares singulos partitus* is found in Agrippa's juvenile treatise *Dialogus de homine* (ed. Zambelli), 48r–v.
[193] As a theoretical concept, the "great chain of being" was introduced by Arthur O. Lovejoy in his classic *The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964). It was further developed by S. K. Heninger in his *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, Cal.: Huntington Library, 1974) and *The Cosmographycal Glass: Renaissance Diagrams of the Universe* (San Marino, Cal.: Huntington Library, 1977) and by a great number of other scholars. For a discussion of the concept more particularly applied to Renaissance Neoplatonists see Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 24–34.

in his omnipotence.[194] In other words, the aim of Agrippa's magician is clearly some sort of *ascension* and *deification*. To use Moshe Idel's words, he wants to become "capable of touching or being touched by the divine"[195] with a delicate but constant emphasis on gaining divine powers. The whole idea rests on a logical and causal connection that Agrippa establishes between the possibility of ascent and the factual descent of the divine virtues through the process of emanation. It is precisely the latter that enables the former and, to emphasize it once again, makes it a natural and "rational" idea.[196]

Imagines imaginum: the sequence of mirrors

The notion of a threefold world is thus crucial for examining Agrippa's views on cosmology. The hierarchical interconnectedness of all the parts of such a world is what enables the two-directional communication along the cosmic spinal cord. Such a permeable structure is made possible by two fundamental and mutually related features of the world: 1) it is emanated from the One, i. e. it is the creation and image of God (*Dei imago mundus*);[197] 2) it is alive, rational, and intelligent, i.e. it has a soul of its own (*anima mundi*).[198]

Agrippa is particularly keen to emphasize the second point. He deduces the living nature of the world from the above-discussed principle of hierarchical influence: in order to be able to exert their influence, the sky and celestial bodies, and indeed the whole universe, must themselves be ensouled

[194] See also Kuhlow, *Die Imitatio Christi*, 30–33.
[195] Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2005), 23. This is what György E. Szőnyi calls *exaltatio*; see his elaboration of this concept in Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 34–37. The term *deificatio*, with all its ambivalent connotations, has also been used by scholars in this context: see, for instance, Jean-Pierre Brach, "Magic IV: Renaissance–17th Century," in Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 731–38.
[196] Agrippa's idea of ascending by degrees had its immediate literary predecessor in Pico's image of the ladder given in his *Oratio* and taken over from Genesis 28:12–13, but interpreted within Pico's doctrine of man's ontological freedom to determine his own nature; see Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man. On Being and the One. Heptaplus*, tr. Douglas Carmichael, with an introduction by Paul J. W. Miller (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 3–4; 9–10.
[197] I 37, *DOP* 155, Tyson 110: *Prima autem Dei imago mundus*; and III 36, *DOP* 506–507, Tyson 579: *Exuperantissimus Deus...cum ipse sit unus, unum creavit mundum*.
[198] II 55–57, *DOP* 383–87.

(*animata*) in the first place, since no influence can come from the body alone (*puro corpore*).[199] For another line of argumentation Agrippa reaches back to Plato's thesis that this world is the most perfect of all worlds as it originates from the Good;[200] and since "the soul is the perfection of the body" (*perfectio corporis anima est*), it follows that this world, *corpus mundi*, must be alive, conscious, and intelligent.[201] For Agrippa, the *anima mundi* is a unifying and all-pervasive principle of the universe that, among other ways of communication, makes a magical *operatio* possible. The author underlies his point by providing a precise definition of this concept:

> The soul of the world therefore is a certain kind of universal life filling all things, bestowing all things, binding, and knitting together all things, so that it might make one frame of the world, and that it might be as it were one instrument making out of many strings one sound, sounding from three kinds of creatures – intellectual, celestial, and corruptible – with one common breath and life.
>
> *Est itaque anima mundi vita quaedam unica omnia replens, omnia perfundens, omnia colligans et connectens, ut unam reddat totius mundi machinam sitque velut unum monochordum ex tribus generibus creaturarum, intellectuali, coelesti et corruptibili reboans, unico flatu tantummodo et unica vita*.[202]

The cosmos thus reflects the unity and all-pervasiveness of the divine. However, it has its own image, man. In a curious and significant diversion from the Christian *homo imago Dei* paradigm, man is seen as an ensouled, rational, and intelligent image of the cosmos, an image of the primary image of God. In a number of chapters Agrippa stresses this *homo imago mundi* paradigm: e.g. in I 33, where he says that "the human nature is the fullest image of the entire universe" (*humana natura…totius universi completissima imago*), or in I 37, where one reads that "the world is the image of God, and man the

[199] II 55, *DOP* 383. This whole statement was added to the 1533 edition.
[200] Plat. *Timaeus* 28A–30D. Agrippa could have found this line of argumentation developed in Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* XI, 4; see Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, Vol. 3, tr. Michael J. B. Allen, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, MA London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 265–67.
[201] II 57, *DOP* 386. This argument again rehearses Ficino's reasoning in *Theol. Plat.* XI, 4.
[202] II 57, *DOP* 387, Tyson 421. This definition is Agrippa's addition to his discussion in the 1533 edition. Freake's translation is slightly modified. For some reason the translator omitted the important word *vita* from the beginning of the sentence.

image of the world" (*Dei imago mundus, mundi homo*).[203]

Agrippa's assertion that "man is not created simply the image of God, but after the image, or the image of the image" (*quod homo non simpliciter imago Dei creatus est, sed ad imaginem, quasi imaginis imago*) is very important in this regard as it argues for the gradual, emanational creation of the human being as opposed to the Genesis creation narrative.[204]

However, the matters become somewhat complicated with the Hermetic account of creation (*Corpus Hermeticum*, I 5–12), in which the first image of God appears to be—at least according to some passages—not the world but the *Word*. Moreover, in the same account one finds that man was created directly by "Mind, the father of all" (I 12), whereas in *CH* VIII 5 Hermes explains to Tat that "mankind, the third living being, came to be in the image of the cosmos."[205] Thus there appear to be two conflicting accounts of man's creation in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which are further complicated by the problem of what exactly *imago imaginis* stands for: is it the image of the cosmos or the image of the first image, the holy word (λόγος ἅγιος)? In *CH* I 5–6, Hermes sees in his vision how "from the light…a holy word mounted upon the <watery> nature" (ἐκ τοῦ φωτός τις λόγος ἅγιος ἐπέβη τῇ φύσει; Ficino reads somewhat differently: *ex hac luminis voce verbum sanctum prodiit*)[206], and Poimandres explains to him that "I am the light you saw, mind, your god" and "the lightgiving word who comes from mind is the son of god" (Τὸ φῶς ἐκεῖνο ἐγώ εἰμι νοῦς ὁ σὸς θεός … ὁ δὲ ἐκ νοὸς φωτεινὸς λόγος,

[203] *DOP* 148, 155. Other such instances are II 27, *DOP* 328, and III 36, *DOP* 507–508, where Agrippa states that "man is called the other world, and the other image of God, because he has in himself all that is contained in the greater world" (*Homo itaque alter mundus vocatus est et altera Dei imago, quia in seipso habet totum quod in maiori mundo continetur*). See also Agrippa, *Dialogus de homine* (ed. Zambelli), 46r–47v, for a clear exposition of the *homo minor mundus* doctrine.

[204] III 36, *DOP* 507, Tyson 579. Again, note Agrippa's cautious wording. He begins the sentence with a *double* syntactic retreat: "some think that it is said that…" (*putant quidam dictum esse…*). However, the very fact that the sentence was *added* to the 1533 edition speaks of its importance for the author and effectively neutralizes the retreat.

[205] Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica*. *The Greek* Corpus Hermeticum *and the Latin* Asclepius *in a New English Translation, with Notes and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3, 26. Here Ficino's translation does not depart from the original. He renders the Greek words Τὸ δὲ τρίτον ζῶον, ὁ ἄνθρωπος κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κόσμου γενόμενος (given here according to a critical edition: *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*. Ad fidem codicum manu scriptorium recognovit Gustavus Parthey [Berlin: Libraria fr. Nicolai, 1854], 59) in the following way: *tertium quoque animal, homo, ad imaginem mundi genitus* (Campanelli, *Pimander*, 50).

[206] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 1; *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 3; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 8.

υἱὸς θεοῦ; *Lumen illud ego sum, mens, deus tuus … mentis vero germen verbum lucens, dei filius*).[207] From these words one concludes that the first image of God must be the *verbum sanctum*. Then again, in *CH* I 9 Poimandres clearly states that the "second mind" (ἕτερον νοῦν, *mentem alteram*) who he creates is a "craftsman" (δημιουργόν, *opificem*), who further carries on the task of creation.[208] Finally, to make things even more complicated, in the passage quoted above, from *CH* VIII 5, Hermes relates to Tat that mankind is the image of the cosmos. Thus one finds three possible candidates for the Hermetic *imago Dei*: the Word, the Demiurge, and the cosmos. When it comes to the *imago imaginis*, the problem simply reproduces itself.

This confusion and ambiguity are reflected in the Nettesheimer's train of thought as he is not entirely consistent in his exposition of the *imago imaginis* doctrine. Thus several times in his work (e.g. III 36) he equates *imago Dei* not with the created world but with the *Verbum Dei*. Instances of this ambiguity, arising from two competing *imago imaginis* concepts, show up persistently in the *De occulta philosophia*. I will return to this problem in Chapter Four, where I analyze Agrippa's understanding of soul and of the *Verbum Dei*.

Once one moves down the chain of images, things get less complicated. The production of images does not end with man. In a fascinating enumeration of cosmic images Agrippa describes the downward movement of the divine beam as if penetrating a sequence of refracting mirrors: "The first Image of God is the world, of the world man, of man beasts, of beasts the zoophyton, of zoophyton plants, of plants metals, of metals stones" (*Prima autem Dei imago mundus, mundi homo, hominis animal, animalis zoophytum, illius vero planta, plantae autem metalla et horum lapides similitudines imaginesque repraesentant*).[209] Furthermore, all these degrees of the living world are not only interconnected as progressively gross images of the same archetypal reality; each shares a decisive

[207] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 2; *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 3; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 8–9.
[208] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 2; *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 5; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 8.
[209] I, 37, *DOP* 155, Tyson 110–11. This is also an addition to the 1533 edition.

quality with the preceding and the following one: plants and animals share the simple quality of being alive (*convenit vegetatione*); animals and men share consciousness (*sensus*), men agree with higher entities (Agrippa says *daemones*) in intelligence (*intellectu*), higher entities with God in immortality. The terms Agrippa uses for this kind of universal interconnectedness are *colligantia* (alliance) and *continuitas* (continuity); superior virtues flow down in a "long and continuous series" (*longa et continua serie*) and "disperse their rays even to the very last things" (*radios suos dispertiendo usque ad ultima*). Agrippa finishes his description in a distinctly Ficinian musical imagery. The upper and lower levels are connected in such a way that

> an influence from their head, the first cause, proceeds as a certain string stretched out to the lowermost things of all, of which string if one end be touched, the whole does presently shake, and such a touch does sound to the other end, and at the motion of the inferior, the superior also is moved, to which the other does answer, as strings in a lute well tuned.
>
> *ut influxus ab eorum capite prima causa, tanquam chorda quaedam tensa, usque ad infima procedat, cuius si unum extremum tangatur, tota subito tremat et tactus eiusmodi usque ad alterum extremum resonet ac moto uno inferiori moveatur et superius, cui illud correspondet, sicut nervi in cithara bene concordata*.[210]

A simple diagram (Figure 1) can show this interdependence within the given cosmic structure. As evident, Agrippa's scheme of emanation is Neoplatonic: there is a first cause (*prima causa*) or the Maker of all things (*omnium opifex*), from whom all things proceed in three successive stages known as the intellectual, the celestial, and the elementary or physical world.[211] It is important to emphasize once again that, in Agrippa's understanding, emanation is also seen as *theophany* since God relegates, deposits his divine virtues, such as omnipotence, in every stage and every aspect of the created world. A good example of this notion is Agrippa's description of the emanation of light: it begins its way

[210] I 37, *DOP* 155, Tyson 111. On Ficino's musical imagery: Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 3–24.
[211] The ultimate source of Agrippa's doctrine of emanation is undoubtedly Plotinus, *Enneads* V 1–2, but through Pico's and Reuchlin's mediation; see note 192.

downwards from God the Father as a divine attribute, "the first true light" (*prima vera lux*), and ends up as the physical phenomenon visible to our eyes (*visibilis claritas*).[212]

As a consequence of this divine outpouring, God is simultaneously transcendent and immanent, and it is precisely his immanence that a magician should utilize to reach transcendence. All the emanated levels are united under the rule of interdependence and such a structure allows for the possibility of influence and communication between the worlds. This is precisely how Agrippa defines this kind of communication: it means "receiving from heaven and answering its superior."[213] One should also note that the line on the diagram dividing the created world from the realm of transcendence is broken. It is to imply that in Agrippa's Neoplatonic understanding of the universe there is no clear ontological boundary and gap between the Creator and his creation so peculiar to Christian theology. Another ontological implication, as Ernst Cassirer pointed out long ago, is that the created world is no longer seen as a static creation of the Christian God; it is no longer a "non-being" of Christian theology, but a dynamic living organism, a "symbol" reflecting the original world.[214]

[212] I 49, *DOP* 177–80.
[213] I 37, *DOP* 153–54, Tyson, 110: *unumquodque inferum suo superiori et per hoc supremo suo genere respondere et ab eisdem suscipere*.
[214] Ernst Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, (Darmstadt: Wissentschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974), 155. This point is particularly emphasized in the context of the Renaissance magi by Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 9.

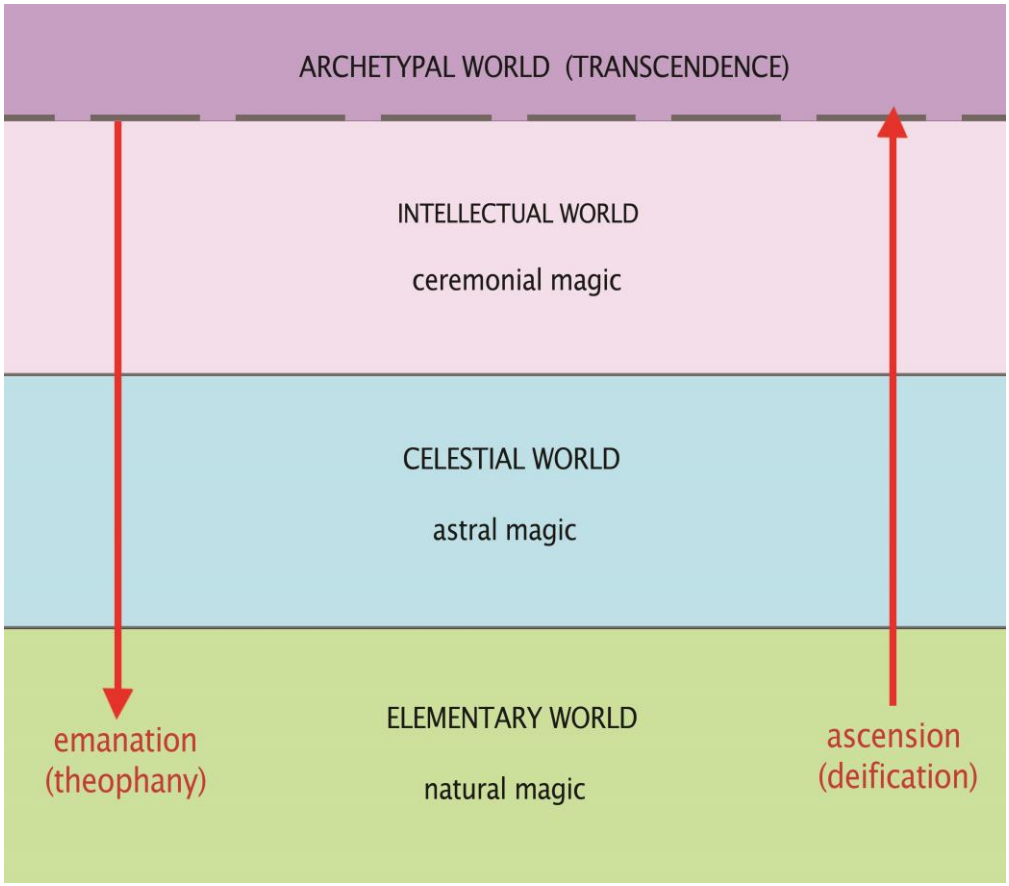

Figure 1: Agrippa's cosmic hierarchy

What one finds then, as delineated in the very first sentence of the *De occulta philosophia*, is a condensed image of a living, dynamic universe which links God and man through a two-directional chain of successive stages. Agrippa underlines this unity of the created world by introducing the well-known concept of *harmonia mundi* (sometimes also termed *concordia mundi*), which he explains by using another important notion, that of *virtus operativa* or *virtus opifex*:

> For this is the harmony of the world, that things supercelestial be drawn down by the celestial, and supernatural by natural, *because there is one operative virtue that is diffused through all kinds of things*; by which virtue indeed, as manifest things are produced out of occult causes, so a magician makes use of things manifest to draw forth things that are occult.
>
> *Ea enim est mundi concordia, ut etiam supercoelestia trahuntur a coelestibus et*

> *supernaturalia a naturalibus conspirent ac trahuntur, quia una virtus opifex et specierum participatio per omnia diffunditur. Quae enim virtus opifex sicut ex occultis rationibus manifesta producit, ita magus assumit manifesta, occulta ut attrahat.*[215]

The words *una virtus opifex* strongly point to what might be termed the common ontological backbone that enables a magical *operatio*. In a differently structured world there would be no room for the kind of magic Agrippa speaks about. This in itself makes an important link between the Agrippan cosmology and anthropology.

Elements and correspondences

As is well known, one of the basic principles of *harmonia mundi* is the principle of correspondences and attractions that arise from them. In a living world, organically connected with its Creator and pervaded by his spirit, everything is connected with everything. Different aspects of the created world are interrelated either on the basis of being composed of the common four elements (however, on different levels of subtlety) or being pervaded by the "occult virtues," which are termed so, in Agrippa's words, "because their causes lie hidden, and man's intellect cannot in any way reach and find them out" (*quia causae earum latentes sunt, ita quod humanus intellectus non potest eas usquequaque investigare*).[216] In either case, a skilled person, a physician or a magician, is able to track the occult relations between things and use them to exert influence upon someone or something outside themselves. Agrippa speaks of these relations in terms of natural sympathies and antipathies, or "friendship" (*amicitia*) and "enmity" (*inimicitia*).[217] The cosmic attraction (*attractus*, συμπάθεια) is

[215] I 38, *DOP* 156, Tyson 112. Italics in the translation mine. Freake omits the words *specierum participatio*, which mean either "participation in [all] species" if *specierum* is taken as an objective genitive, or "participation of [all] species" if it is interpreted as a subjective genitive. Both interpretations fit the context.
[216] I 10, *DOP* 105, Tyson 32. It is important to note that by this definition Agrippa implicitly rejects the idea that these virtues are something unnatural. By defining them merely in epistemological terms he attempts to remove their theological stigmatization. In this way he also draws a subtle parallel between occult and scientific knowledge as both kinds of knowledge are acquired by gradual empirical progress away from ignorance. Note also Agrippa's observation from I 59, *DOP* 211, Tyson 186, that "by the knowledge of many experiences, little by little, arts and sciences are obtained" (*ex pluribus peritiis paulatim cumulatur ars et scientia*).
[217] I 17, *DOP* 117.

manifested either naturally (*per naturam*) or through art (*per artem*);[218] the other option is important as it leaves room for magical action even in the cases where there is lack of natural sympathy.

In *DOP* I 37 Agrippa speaks of universal correspondences that pervade and interconnect the created world: a mineral can exist in the state of mutual attraction with an animal, a star, a color, etc. (such as the case of gold, lion, and the Sun). However, overarching all the other levels is the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm, in other words—the universe and man, its image.

A closer look at Agrippa's understanding of the correspondences between the four classical elements reveals that he does not limit them to the elementary and celestial worlds. Instead, he states that earth and the other three elements are to be found on all levels of existence, even in the realm of transcendence:

> It is the unanimous consent of all Platonists that as in the original and exemplary world all things are in all, so also in this corporeal world all things are in all [although in different modes, according to the nature of each thing]. So also the elements are not only in these inferior bodies, but also in the heavens, in stars, in devils, in angels, and lastly in God, the maker and original example of all things.
>
> *Est Platonicorum omnium unanimis sententia, quemadmodum in archetypo mundo omnia sunt in omnibus, ita etiam in hoc corporeo mundo omnia sunt in omnibus esse, modis tamen diversis, pro natura videlicet suscipientium: sic et elementa non solum sunt in istis inferioribus, sed et in coelis, in stellis, in daemonibus, in angelis, in ipso denique omnium Opifice et Archetypo*.[219]

In their ontologically highest forms, the elements are Ideas abiding in God. Describing the gradual descent of Ideas into increasingly grosser forms, Agrippa concludes that "every species has its celestial shape, or figure that is suitable to it, from which also proceeds a wonderful power of operating, and it receives this proper gift from its own Idea, through the seminal forms of the Soul of the World" (*quaelibet species habeat figuram coelestem sibi convenientem, ex qua etiam provenit sibi*

[218] I 37, *DOP* 154.
[219] I 8, *DOP* 101, Tyson 26. The bracketed words are missing in Freake's translation. Clearly, Agrippa refers to Plato's doctrine of Ideas, but what strikes the eye here is his attributing the presence of elements to the personality of God himself.

mirabilis potestas in operando, qualem per rationes animae mundi seminales propriam ab idea sua suscipit dotem).[220] In other words, it is the common ontological "backbone" of the hierarchically structured universe that makes any magical *operatio* possible.[221]

This idea is perhaps best visually expressed in a diagram made by Robert Fludd (1574–1637) (Figure 2) in his early seventeenth-century work titled *Utriusque cosmi, maioris scilicet et minoris, metaphysica, physica, atque technica historia* (1617–21): two opposite triangles represent the so-called "formal" and "material" pyramids that connect all the levels of the creation with the Creator. On its way down every Idea, as a pure spiritual and conceptual form, loses in its formality and acquires increasingly gross material components, with the earth as the basis of the material pyramid and the symbol of the Holy Trinity as the basis of the formal one. If the formal pyramid stands for the process of emanation, the material stands for the magician's ascent to the transcendental domain.

[220] I 11, *DOP* 107, Tyson 35.

[221] Here, like in so many instances, Agrippa relies on Ficino by referring not to him but to the unnamed *Platonici*. Ficino too emphasizes the homogeneity of the elemental and celestial regions and claims that the elements exist in the metaphysical realm as well, thus forming a link in a causal change extending from the ideas of the elements in the Divine Mind to the physical world; see Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, Vol. 1, ed. James Hankins, tr. Michael J. B. Allen (London/Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 263. See also James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance II. Platonism* (Rome: Storia e letteratura, 2004), 169–72.

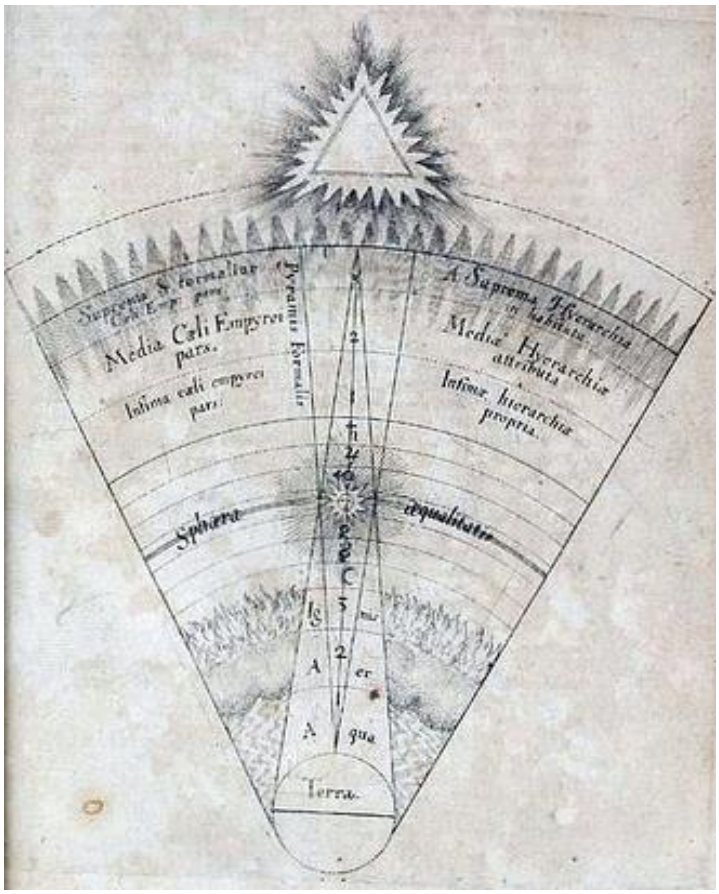

Figure 2: The material and the formal pyramidal components of the created world. Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmi, maioris scilicet et minoris, metaphysica, physica, atque technica historia*, 1617–1621, 1:89. Courtesy of Somogyi Library, Szeged.

Within this conceptual framework Agrippa develops his well-known tripartite typology of magic that embraces traditions as diverse as ancient Greek natural philosophy, medieval talismanic magic, and Kabbalah. They all serve the same purpose: to enable the magician's rise to power, crowned with the restoration of his prelapsarian, Adamic state, in which he once partook of the eternal omniscience and omnipotence of God. Agrippa begins with natural magic, seeking the correspondences and occult virtues of things in the realms of herbs, animals, stones, and so forth, and then moves on to the celestial sphere, in which he utilizes its basic elements – numbers and planets – by means of celestial images, geometry, and astrology. Finally, he reaches the intellectual sphere, in which he

employs forms of magic closest to religion: attaining ritual purity, deriving angelic and demonic names, their characters and seals, summoning spirits, etc.

One should bear in mind, however, that all these different forms of magic rest on the same fundamental principle of ontological unity, of which the universal correspondences and occult virtues are only indicators. This, in my opinion, is why Agrippa stretched the scope of the term *magia*: his intention could have been to cover all the three levels of the created world and the human disciplines corresponding to them. As Perrone Compagni and Hanegraaff point out, Agrippa probably modeled his division of magic after, or was at least influenced by, Johan Reuchlin's division of the *ars miraculorum*.[222] There was, however, a significant difference: Reuchlin divided all the *artes miraculorum* into physics, astrology, and magic, each linked to its own world. Thus he reserved the term *magia* only for the intellectual world, while Agrippa used it as the umbrella term for all three worlds. Hanegraaff's thesis that Agrippa certainly agreed with Reuchlin that "the true and pure magic that his work was all about was the divine theurgy belonging to the third level" will be discussed later in my thesis.[223]

Given all outlined above, it may come as a surprise that the editions of the *De occulta philosophia* published during Agrippa's lifetime and prepared by him contain practically no visual representations of any of these pivotal concepts. Images in these editions are by and large limited to the representations of magical seals and astrological symbols, with only a few anthropomorphic emblematic representations. One finds such examples mainly in the second book, which deals with celestial harmony and proportions. Various tables of correspondences, characters, and scripts—particularly Hebrew letters and examples of "celestial writing"—appear throughout the work,

[222] Perrone Compagni, Introduction to *DOP*, 17–18; Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 7–8. The reference is to Reuchlin, *De verbo mirifico*, 2.
[223] Hanegraaff, "Better than Magic," 7–8. See Chapter Four, 185–95 for a further discussion.

especially in the third book, and these could also be regarded as images.[224] However, symbolic images and emblematic figures representing Agrippa's vision of the hierarchically structured universe, in which the idea of ascension acquires its logical—and even visually perceptible and representative—justification, appear only in the much later editions and translations of *De occulta philosophia* and are borrowed from the works of other authors.[225]

Symbolic images such as this one were fairly common in early modern treatises on cosmology, natural philosophy, magic, and similar disciplines. But why are they entirely absent from Agrippa's work? Given the importance he attributed to the cosmological framework of his magical theory, one would expect to find elaborate diagrams and images of this kind. However, there are none and this curious absence is something to be considered.

The immediate reasons appear to be evident. To begin with, one should have in mind that medieval and ancient authors did not make as sharp a distinction between the verbal and the visual as we do nowadays. However, to say that Agrippa simply did not care for visual language would be an easy way out. The distinction in question began to emerge more and more clearly in the Renaissance, as indicated by the appearance of a completely new genre of emblem books, and one wonders what makes the Nettesheimer an exception in this regard.

Undoubtedly the time factor played a significant role in his case. Agrippa finally managed to have his *De occulta philosophia* printed only in 1531 (the first book) and in 1533 (the integral version). Given the manifold difficulties accompanying Agrippa's attempts to publicize his life's work (such as

[224] That is, if one follows Mino Gabriele's classification given in Gabriele, *Alchimia e Iconologia*, 28, quoted in Peter J. Forshaw, "Alchemy in the Amphitheatre. Some consideration of the alchemical content of the engravings in Heinrich Khunrath's Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom," in J. Wamberg (ed.), *Art and Alchemy* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 154–76, quote on 201. Although Gabriele's division pertains to alchemical images, the basic definition of the category matches Agrippa's use of characters too: they can be understood as parts of "a secret vocabulary composed of cryptographic and hieroglyphic ciphers, such as geometrical shapes." Conversely, it might be argued that Agrippa treated his characters as letters, not as images, emphasizing their semantic component.

[225] This is the case with many modern editions, such as Donald Tyson's annotated and richly illustrated edition of Freake's translation.

his incarceration or the condemnations by the theologians of Sorbonne and Louvain), it would be difficult to imagine the German humanist searching for a suitable artist to decorate his work with illustrations even if he wanted to. Even more importantly, the genre of emblem book, which would inaugurate a whole new model of symbolic communication and become highly influential, was only beginning to emerge around the time of the publishing of Agrippa's work. Andreas Alciato's *Emblemata*, the first emblem book of all, appeared in 1531 (while the first, unpublished draft from 1522 did not even contain images) and was followed and emulated by many in the ensuing decades, but too late for Agrippa to be influenced by this new literary fashion. Its influence is clearly seen in the practice of illustrating new editions or translations of old books, such as Petrus Bonus' *Pretiosa margarita novella* (1546) or the first French translation of Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* (1543)[226]—something that was in store for later editions of the *De occulta philosophia* too.

Horapollo is a useful example in this context. Agrippa refers to him a number of times, especially in terms of animal symbolism discussed in the first book of his occult encyclopedia,[227] which indicates that he read either the first Latin translation by Bernardino Trebazio (Augsburg, 1515) or the second one by Filippo Fasanini (Bologna, 1517), if not the Greek *editio princeps* published by Manutius in 1505. However, none of these editions contains extensive illustrations; as mentioned above, it is only in the 1543 French translation that a large number of engravings appear. It thus parallels the pattern observed in the *De occulta philosophia*, which received convenient didactic diagrams only in its later editions.

One such diagram, for instance, comes, again, from Fludd (Figure 3); it contains all the above discussed elements of Agrippa's universe. The Great Chain of Being is represented by its explicit physical metaphor, linking God with man through the medium of *Anima mundi*. Man is represented in

[226] See Forshaw , "Alchemy in the Amphitheatre," 196–97.
[227] See, for instance, *DOP* 120–21. For other examples see Perrone Compagni's *Index nominum*, s. v. Orus Apollo, *Ibid*., 640.

an ape-like form as the imitator of Nature or the "lesser world."[228] The three spheres, physical, celestial, and intellectual, are also clearly visible and represented by the creatures or entities inhabiting them. It is interesting to note that Fludd's diagram contains the same pictorial articulation of the notion of unclear ontological boundaries as shown above in my simplified diagram. The head of *Anima mundi*, whose feet are firmly placed on the earthly soil, penetrates the realm of intelligences. Even more importantly, the same realm is distinctly penetrated by another object of the diagram: the divine cloud marked by the sacred letters of Yahweh's name.

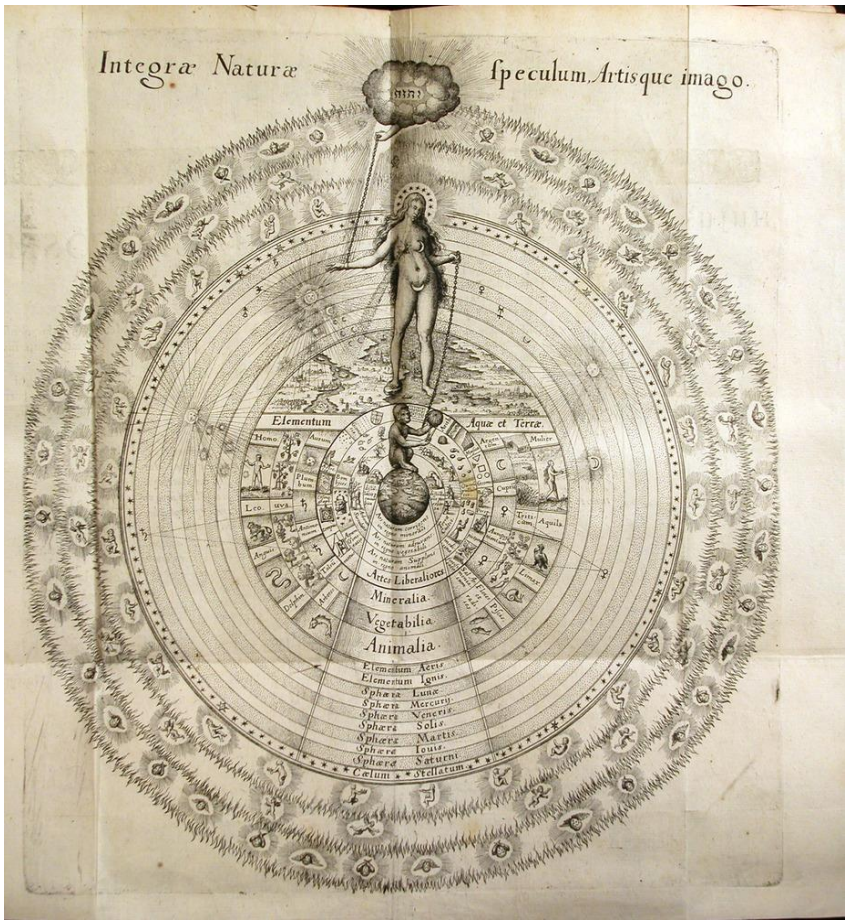

Figure 3: Robert Fludd, *Utriusque Cosmi ... Historia*, Oppenhemii 1617, p. 9. Copyright: Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/na-4f-41/start.htm?image=00009 [last accessed: 27/3/2016].

[228] However, it should be noted that, although he discusses the *homo minor mundus* concept throughout his work, Agrippa himself does not use the ape-metaphor.

CONTESTED VIEWS: EMANATION OR CREATION?

Going back to the first fundamental feature of the world—namely, that it is God's creation—one must admit a certain degree of ambiguity in Agrippa's statements in this regard. In *DOP* III 36, a chapter that is essential for our understanding of the *homo minor mundus* doctrine, Agrippa elaborates on the act of creation. A substantial part of his elaboration is an addendum to the 1533 edition. Yet, what was supposed to clarify the young Agrippa's ideas of the universe and man has only made things more complicated. The 1510 version of the text reads as a straightforward Hermetic account:

> God also created man after his image; for as the world is the image of God, so man is the image of the world; (…) therefore he is called microcosm, that is, the lesser world. The world is a rational creature, immortal; man in like manner is rational but mortal; for, as Hermes says, seeing the world itself is immortal, it is impossible that any part of it can perish: therefore we say a man dies when his soul and body are separated (…) Therefore man is called the other world, and the other image of God, because he has in himself all that is contained in the greater world.
>
> *Creavit Deus etiam hominem ad imaginem suam: nam sicuti imago Dei mundus est, sic imago mundi homo est; (...) iccirco microcosmus dictus est, hoc est minor mundus. Mudus animal est rationale, immortale; homo similiter animal est rationale sed mortale ; nam, ut inquit Hermes, cum mundus ipse immortalis sit, impossibile est partem eius aliquam interire: mori igitur dicimus hominem quando anima et corpus separatantur. (...) Homo itaque alter mundus vocatus est et altera Dei imago, quia in seipsum habet totum quod in maiori mundo continetur.*[229]

I will return to this important passage in a later part of my analysis, but for the moment it will suffice to say that it appears to be in congruence with all what has been said above about Agrippa's views on cosmology, especially with his opening programmatic sentence. The problems arise with his later additions. The 1533 version of the chapter begins with a big chunk of added text that closely articulates the relations between God and his creation:

[229] III 36, *DOP* 507–8, Tyson 579. *Ad imaginem suam* clearly comes from Genesis 1:27, but the rest is a direct reference to the *Corpus Hermeticum* VIII.

> The most abundant God, as Trismegistus says, has framed two images like himself, namely the world and man, that in one of these he might sport himself with certain wonderful operations, and in the other, that he might enjoy his delights. Since he is one, he has created a single world; since he is infinite, he has created a round world; since he is eternal, he has created an incorruptible and everlasting world; (…) and since he is omnipotent, by his will alone and not by any necessity of nature, he has created the world not out of any foregoing matter, but out of nothing; and since he is the chief goodness, embracing his word, which is the first idea of all things, with his sublime will and essential love, he has fabricated this external world after the example of the internal, namely ideal world, yet sending forth nothing of the essence of the idea, but created out of nothing that which he had from eternity by the idea.
>
> *Exuperantissimus Deus, ut Trismegistus ait, duas sibi similes finxit imagines, mundum videlicet atque hominem, in quorum altero luderet miris quibusdam operationibus, in altero vero deliciis frueretur. Qui, cum ipse sit unus, mundum creavit unum; cum ipse sit infinitus, mundum creavit rotundum; cum ipse sit aeternus, mundum creavit incorruptibilem et aeviternum; (...) et cum ipse sit omnipotens, sola voluntate sua, non ulla naturae necessitate mundum non ex praeiacente material, sed ex nihilo creavit; et cum sit summa bonitas, verbum suum, quod est prima omnium rerum idea, optima sua voluntate essentialique amore complexus, mundum hunc extrinsecum ad exemplar mundi intrinseci, videlicet idealis, fabricavit, nihil tamen extramittendo de essentia ideae, sed ex nihilo creavit quod ab aeterno habuit per ideam*.[230]

One might notice here that Agrippa, even though he begins by referring to Hermes Trismegistus, apparently reverts to the orthodox Christian concept of the creation: in just a few lines he mentions *creatio ex nihilo* twice, emphasizing that the act of creation was due to *sola voluntate sua, non ulla naturae necessitate* ("by his will alone and not by any necessity of nature"). Moreover, God's essence does not take part in the process of creation; it remains transcendental and eternally aloof as *Verbum Dei* or *idea*. Why did Agrippa feel the need to add a section that would so strongly contradict the Neoplatonic notion of spontaneous emanation suggested by his opening sentence and, indeed, by the rest of the work?

Before even starting to answer this question, one comes across another problem in the same chapter, another late addition that contradicts the main argument here, namely that man is an *imago imaginis*. In this passage, which reads like another statement of creed, Agrippa says:

[230] III 36, *DOP* 506–7, Tyson 579.

> Notwithstanding the true image of God is his Word, the wisdom, life, light and truth existing by himself, of which image man's soul is the image, in regard of which *we are said to be made after the image of God, not after the image of the world or of the creatures*.
>
> *Veruntamen vera Dei imago Verbum suum est, sapientia, vita, lux et veritas, per seispsum existens, cuius imaginis animus humanus imago est, propter quam ad imaginem Dei facti esse dicimur, non ad imaginem mundi aut creaturarum*.[231]

Time and again, the reader is faced with Agrippa's indirect mode of argumentation. How should one understand the passive phrase *esse dicimur* ("we are said to be") here? Does the German humanist merely refer to another opinion, another philosophical stance by saying "this is why we are *also* said to be…"? Had he used *sumus* instead of *esse dicimur*, things would have been somewhat less confusing. However, I maintain that this passage cannot simply be a "neutral" reference to another point of view and that it should be read in correlation with the above-cited passage from the beginning of the chapter. This kind of occasional retreat to what looks like a more orthodox position is not such a rare phenomenon in the *De occulta philosophia*. It is not impossible that statements like this—even when they are in collision with other expressed opinions—serve to occasionally remind the reader of Agrippa's allegiance to the true creed.

And yet, it might be that Agrippa's ambivalence comes not only from the abiding strength and authority of Scripture, but also from the peculiarities of the Hermetic narrative of creation. I already mentioned the unclear situation with *imagines* in the Hermetic treatises. Perhaps some of those ambiguities are reflected in the passages quoted above. I believe, however, that it is the Hermetic account of creation that causes a strong overlapping of traditions in the Nettesheimer's view on this issue. As noticed by a number of scholars, the Hermetic account of creation bears certain similarities

[231] *Ibid*. Italics in the translation mine.

with the Biblical one and could thus have pushed Agrippa's thinking in that direction.[232]

In contrast to the Neoplatonic notion of spontaneous emanation, the *Corpus Hermeticum* paints a more personalized image of God who creates the world out his free will; it calls him "the Father" and repeatedly states that the world is "begotten" and "created" by him (ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γενόμενος, *ab eo genitus*; ὑπὸ τοὺ πατρὸς γέγονε, *a patre factus*).[233] Moreover, *CH* VIII 3 makes it clear that the act of creation was due to the Father's will, who "*wanted* to adorn what comes after him with every quality" (πάσῃ ποιότητι κοσμῆσαι βουλόμενος τὸ μετ' αὐτοῦ ποιόν; *exornare autem voluit id quod post ipsum*)[234] Also, at the beginning of his vision of the creation in *CH* I 4–5, in a well-known mythical scene, Hermes sees "darkness [that] arose separately and descended" (καὶ μετ' ὀλίγον σκότος κατωφερὲς ἦν ἐν μέρει γεγενημένον; *umbra quedam horrenda obliqua revolutione subterlabebatur*).[235] It turns into a watery substance, from which gradually everything else proceeds. Perhaps the image of darkness resonated better with the Christian *creatio ex nihilo*, leading Agrippa to his ambiguous statements.[236]

Despite these ambiguities, however, the concept of emanation (or at least gradual creation) definitely prevails in the *De occulta philosophia*, and so does one of its central ideas: that God does not

[232] On the similarities between the Hermetic and Biblical accounts of creation see Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 100–102, with the accompanying references. Some scholars even find traces of Manichaean and Mandaean dualism in that account (Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 98).
[233] VIII 2, Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 25; *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 57; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 53.
[234] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 25 (italics mine); *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 58; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 50.
[235] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 1; *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 2; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 8.
[236] When speaking of the relations between the Hermetic and Neoplatonic views of creation, one should be cautious about the term "spontaneous," which has stirred a great deal of discussion among scholars. Generally, it is accepted that the Plotinian emanation from the One is a "spontaneous" act: see, for instance, A. H. Armstrong's old but still valuable discussion "Emanation in Plotinus," *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 46, No. 181 (Jan., 1937): 61–66; or Dmitri Nikulin, "The One and the Many in Plotinus," *Hermes*, 126. Bd., H. 3 (1998): 326–40, who refers to *Ennead* V.1.6.38 for the claim that "everything which is perfect *necessarily* produces or gives" (quote on 326). However, Dominic J. O' Meara, *Plotinus. An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 68–9, warns against simplifications and refers to Plotinus himself, *Ennead* VI.8, who is cautious about applying human language to the sphere of transcendence. In other words, the opposites of necessity/free will cannot be straightforwardly applied to the One. In sum, Agrippa's ambiguity in this context might have something to do with Plotinus' own ambiguity with regard to the exact meaning of emanation.

create directly but through intermediaries.[237] In order to reaffirm Agrippa's predominantly unorthodox view on the act of creation, in the followings I refer to several important loci where he claims that lesser levels are *not* created by God directly, but by the secondary creator—the universe. In Chapter II 55 he quotes Virgil, *Aeneid* 6:724–31, and interprets the lines as follows: "For what else do these verses seem to mean than that the world not only has a spirit and soul, but also partakes of the divine mind and is *the source of all inferior things*?" (*Quid enim hi versus aliud velle videntur, quam mundum non modo habere spiritum et animam, sed etiam mentis divinae esse participem atque omnium inferiorum originem*).[238]

Even if it could be argued that this statement is again indirect and inconclusive (*velle videntur* = "seem to mean"), the following chapter begins with a rare example of straightforward pronouncement: "The world, the heavens, the stars, and the elements have a soul, *with which they cause a soul in these inferior and mixed bodies*." (*Habet mundus, habent coeli, habent stellae, habent elementa animam, cum qua causant animam in istis inferioribus atque mixtis*).[239] What one finds here is a clearly unorthodox attempt to transfer the divine prerogative of soul-making from God to the created world.[240] Once the creative power is relegated from the creator to the creation, the next logical step would be to attribute such a power to man.

Finally, Chapter I 61 ("On the forming of man") contains some crucial arguments in favor of gradual, mediated creation as opposed to the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*. The opening lines set the context for the rest of the chapter; even though Agrippa resorts again to his evasive strategy by referring to *theologorum quorundam opinio,* it is evident from the rest of the discussion that he counts

[237] Certainly, the idea of intermediaries is present in the *Corpus Hermeticum* too, as opposed to the orthodox Christian doctrine; see Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 2–3, on Demiurge or "the craftsman." Thus it is not easy to discern between the Neoplatonic and Hermetic background of some of Agrippa's statements.
[238] II 55, *DOP* 383–4, Tyson 417. Italics in the translation mine.
[239] II 56, DOP 384, Tyson 419. Italics in the translation mine.
[240] For the contrary, theologically orthodox position see Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I, *Quaest*. 44.1–45.8.

himself among those theologians. These highly important lines read as follows:

> It is the opinion of some theologians that God did not immediately create the body of the primeval man, but that he compounded and framed it by the assistance of the heavenly spirits. This opinion is favored by Alcinous from Plato's school; he thinks that God is the chief creator of the whole world, of both good and bad spirits, and that he thus immortalized them, but that all kinds of mortal animals were produced by the lesser gods at the command of God Almighty; for if he should have created them, they must have been immortal.
>
> *Est theologorum quorundam opinio Deum ipsum hominis primaevi corpus non immediate creasse, sed coelitum adiutorio ex elementis composuisse atque formasse; cui opinioni adstipulatur etiam Alcinous ex Platonis dogmate, putans summum Deum mundi totius deorumque et daemonum creatorem esse atque illa iccirco immortalia esse, caetera autem et mortalium animantium genera iuniores deos ad mandatum summi Dei procreasse: nam, si ipse haec etiam genuisset, immortalia nata fuissent*.[241]

The strength of the argument is based on the two closely interrelated pairs of terminological dichotomy: *creare* vs. *componere/formare* and *immortalis* vs. *mortalis*. Moving away from his initial evasiveness, Agrippa continues by stating —this time in the indicative mood—that the lesser gods "put together" (*confecerunt*) the body of the first man by combining the four principle elements and that they subjected it to the service of the soul. The remainder of the chapter discusses man's external and internal senses; to say it once again, this discussion is decisively marked by the grammatical indicative mood and based on the opening sentence of the work quoted above.

To sum up, despite occasional inconsistencies in his argumentation, it is beyond doubt that Cornelius Agrippa subscribed to a Neoplatonic/Hermetic view of the universe, which is characterized by several crucial aspects: It originates from God through a process of emanation that keeps the ontological umbilical cord between the progenitor and its progeny intact.[242] As a consequence of this

[241] I 61, *DOP* 216.

[242] It should be noted though that scholastic theologians also operate with the term *emanatio*, but in a very different context; see Aquinas, *Summa Theol*. I, *Quest*. 45, a. 1, where he argues that God is the universal cause of all emanation and adds that "this emanation we designate by the name of creation" (*hanc quidem emanationem designamus nomine creationis*). Note: all the citations from Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, both in the Latin original and English translation, are given according to the Benziger Bros. edition (New York, 1947–48), translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, available online at http://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa/index.html [last accessed: 27/10/2016].

ontological unity, all segments of the universe partake of the divine nature, albeit in different degrees, according to their position in the tripartite cosmic scheme. The participation in the divine makes the universe a living organism in which all parts are interconnected according to the laws of subordination and correspondences. God not only creates but also delegates his creative power to lower agents, who then carry on the process of creation on progressively lower levels. In such a universe, using the same cosmic ladder to climb back to the archetypal state of unity with God appears to be a natural and reasonable idea.

CHAPTER THREE

TWO TRIADS OF AGRIPPA'S ANTHROPOLOGY

Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* provides abundant, albeit scattered material for elucidating his views on the nature of man. It is safe to say that the German humanist's anthropology stems directly from his cosmology. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the first book of the *De occulta philosophia* paints the picture of a living, hierarchically structured cosmos in which magical operation is seen as both possible and natural—that is, perfectly in tune with the nature and structure of the cosmos itself. Moreover, the author perceives *magia* as a highly efficient means for ascending back to the original realm of transcendence. Accordingly, the focal point in this picture is the operator himself, the human being.

Viewed in its main contours, Agrippa's anthropology is articulated in what might be called two triads. The first, more fundamental triad consists of the opposites of soul and body, with the spirit as their mediator. The second pertains to the domain of the soul itself and consists of what Agrippa terms the *mens*, *ratio* and *idolum*. He adopts this terminology directly from Marsilio Ficino; Charles Nauert calls it Agrippa's "tripartite psychology."[243] Agrippa's indebtedness to Ficino pertains to the first triad too: throughout my analysis I take into consideration the fact that he relies heavily on Ficino's tripartite

[243] Nauert, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agrippa-nettesheim/ [last accessed: 11/11/2016]. Perrone Compagni, "Dispersa intentio," 163–64, calls it Ficino's "psychological conception" and rightly points out that Agrippa remained basically faithful to it despite his own modifications.

notion of the human being, whereby body and soul, being the two poles of what is perceived as "man," are united by a third component—the spirit, serving as an intermediary between the two extremes.

In the present chapter I set out to examine the key terms of those two triads and the coordinates of the field within which Agrippa envisages his "man the operator." These coordinates, as I argue throughout my thesis, correspond more closely to the Neoplatonic and Hermetic than to the Christian views on man's nature, although Agrippa interprets them as elements of the latter. Even in cases such as his short but important *Dialogus de homine*, which might be taken to represent a monist anthropology peculiar to Christianity, the dualist perspective, in my opinion, remains more fundamental to Agrippa's understanding of man.[244]

THE FIRST TRIAD: *ANIMA, CORPUS, SPIRITUS*

At the beginning of the first book of his masterpiece, the *Platonic Theology*, Marsilio Ficino pens the following inspired lines:

> Only after the death of the body can man become any happier. It seems therefore to follow of necessity that once our souls leave this prison, some other light awaits them. (…) But I pray that as heavenly souls longing with desire for our heavenly home we may cast off the bonds of our terrestrial chains; cast them off as swiftly as possible, so that, uplifted on Platonic wings and with God as our guide, we may fly unhindered to our ethereal abode.[245]

Even though the cautious author, an ordained priest, appends a strong disclaimer to the beginning of his work ("Whatever subject I discuss, here or elsewhere, I wish to state only what is approved by the

[244] It is important to clarify here that I use the term "dualist" solely in the eschatological sense, i.e. with regard to that component of man which is immortal and that which is not. How this dualism relates to the proposed tripartite scheme will be discussed in the present chapter.

[245] *Solum autem post mortem corporis* [*homo*] *beatior effici potest, necessarium esse videtur animis nostris ab hoc carcere discedentibus lucem aliquam superesse*. (…) *Solvamus, obsecro, caelestes animi caelestis patriae cupidi, solvamus quamprimum vincula compedum terrenarum, ut alis sublati platonicis ac deo duce in sedem aetheream liberius pervolemus*. (*Theol. Plat*. I. 1,1) – Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, Vol. 1, Books I–IV, tr. Michael J. B. Allen, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 14–15.

Church")[246], the quoted lines reveal several provoking ideas that necessitate closer examination. The most striking is, of course, that "man" can become happier only after the death of the "body." What one finds almost explicated here is the idea that man is *not* his body. Ficino clearly juxtaposes two distinct subjects, *homo* and *corpus*, and brings them into a relation of dissent or disharmony. The bearer of desires is the "heavenly soul" (*caelestis animus*), which is trapped in the Platonic prison (*carcer*) and tied by its "terrestrial chains" (*vincula compedum terrenarum*). One might thus conclude that, for Marsilio Ficino, "man" is actually his soul.[247]

The opening sentences set the tone for the entire Book I, in which Ficino argues not only for the immortality of the soul, but for its centrality. As Michael Allen and James Hankins note in their Introduction to the work, Ficino sees the problem of the soul as in essence a metaphysical, and specifically as an ontological issue.[248] Thus in the first three chapters of Book I he sets out to establish the basic coordinates of his conceptual framework. In this framework, the role of body is downgraded to being merely an instrument of soul, which is the midpoint of the cosmic spinal cord: it is "the link that holds all nature together—it controls qualities and bodies while it joins itself with angel and with God."[249] In opposition to the inert mass of our bodies (*pigram hanc molem corporum*) there exists a higher sort of form which is in a certain sense changeable but indivisible. That is the rational soul, which is the moving force behind the body. Significantly, Ficino links the active nature of soul and the passive nature of body to the physical qualities of solidity and density: the more solid an entity is, the less capable it is of penetrating other objects and, consequently, acting upon them. So all power of

[246] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, Vol. 1, 1.
[247] Being a humanist and a translator of Plato and Neoplatonists, Ficino was naturally exposed through his education and readings to ancient Greek anthropological dualism. For a useful overview of this dualism in the context of Christian and Pauline anthropology see Robert H. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology. With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83–156.
[248] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, xiv.
[249] *Ibid*., 17 (I.1,3): *vinculum naturae totius apparet, regit qualitates et corpora, angelo se iungit et deo.* However, Ficino explicitly rejects the preexistence of souls: see *Theologia Platonica* XVIII, 3, in Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, Vol. 6, Books XVII–XVIII, tr. Michael J. B. Allen, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 89.

acting, concludes Ficino, must be attributed to an incorporeal nature alone.[250]

Although it is sometimes noted that Ficino owes a lot to Thomas Aquinas and deploys scholastic concepts in his *Platonic Theology*,[251] even a cursory glance at the way Aquinas treats the issue of body and soul (*Summa theol*. I, *Quest*. 75) shows significant differences. For Aquinas, "it is clear that man is not a soul only, but something composed of soul and body" (*manifestum est quod homo non est anima tantum, sed est aliquid compositum ex anima et corpore*).[252] The soul is a part of the human species and is not a hypostasis or person in itself. Finally, the body is *necessary* for the action of the intellect: rather than saying that the soul understands, it is more correct to say that man understands *through* the soul. Thus, even if Ficino, as Allen and Hankins observe, tried to sketch out a unitary theological tradition in which he would reconcile ancient philosophy with Christianity, anthropology is certainly not one of the fields in which he succeeded.

Cornelius Agrippa must have studied Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* with great care: Vittoria Perrone Compagni tracks down at least a hundred instances of Ficino's mostly unacknowledged influence in the *De occulta philosophia*, many of them coming from the *Platonic Theology*.[253] It thus comes as no surprise that Agrippa's first anthropological triad is distinctly Ficinian in nature.

Soul and body: a polar conception of man?

It would seem that the basic frame within which Agrippa expounds his anthropological views is that of a dichotomy between—but at the same time a unity of—soul and body. However, this picture is

[250] *Ibid*. 20–21 (I.2,2).
[251] See Michael Allen's and James Hankins' Introduction to the *Theologia Platonica*, viii–ix. See also Frank Klaassen's remark about Aquinas's corpus as being the benchmark by which orthodoxy was measured even for humanists (Chapter One, 35 n. 61).
[252] *Summa theol*. Ia q. 75 a. 4 co.
[253] *DOP* 636, *Index nominum*, s.v. Ficinus Marsilius. In addition to the *Theologia Platonica* I, of particular importance for Agrippa's anthropological views must have been the following parts of the work: III.1–2, IV.1, V.1–15, VI.1–16, XII.1–7, XIII.1–10, XIV.1–8 ("Why are rational souls imprisoned in earthly bodies?"), XVII.1–4 ("What is the soul's status before it approaches the body, and what after it leaves?"), and XVIII.1–4. See also Zambelli, "Magic and Radical Reformation in Agrippa," 92–94.

complicated by Agrippa's persistent emphasis on spirit, which evidently plays a prominent role in his anthropology and theory of magic. Moreover, the problem is to discern what exactly spirit is in Agrippa's understanding and how it relates to soul and body. Is it sufficiently different from both to be considered a separate hypostasis of man and does it imply a tripartite scheme of the human nature?

As already discussed, the German humanist views the creation of man as the result of a gradual emanation, which is aptly represented by the *imago imaginis* doctrine: man is not a direct image of God, but a mediated one, an image of God's direct image, the world (or the Word, according to the alternative version), wherefrom man draws his own qualities. In other words, being a microcosm or *minor mundus*, he partakes of the basic qualities of the greater world he belongs to. This view inevitably leads to some difficulties since the two fundamental features of the world, as stressed by Agrippa, are its rationality and immortality.[254] Whereas man's rationality is undisputed, the other feature is obviously more problematic. Of course, Agrippa does not—and cannot—claim that man is immortal. Yet, what he does is qualify human mortality as mere "dissolvability." Death does not mean vanishing; it simply implies a separation of the soul from the body, whereupon both continue to exist in some form.[255] As I argue bellow, this ontological downgrading of the role of death might be an indication of the way the Nettesheimer understands man's *post mortem* status and, indeed, the nature of man as such. In other words, if it is obvious that the physical body is not immortal, what about man's soul? It is certainly immortal, but is it immortal *in its entirety*? And what about spirit in this regard? Is it subject to mortality like body or is more akin to soul? These questions form the core of the analysis presented in this chapter.

[254] III 36, *DOP* 507, Tyson 579: *Mundus animal est rationale, immortale* ("The world is a rational creature, immortal").
[255] *Ibid*.: *Mori igitur nomen vanum est et, quemadmodum vacuum, nusquam est; mori igitur dicimus hominem, quando anima et corpus separantur, non quod aliquid eorum intereat sive convertantur in nihilum*. ("Therefore to die is a vain word, and in the same way as vacuum is nowhere, so is death; therefore we say a man dies when his soul and body are separated, not that anything of them perishes or is turned into nothing.") See also Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 8, for a comment on this passage.

A definition of soul

Agrippa's treatment of the subject of body and soul is almost hopelessly scattered throughout his occult encyclopedia and at times considerably inconsistent; yet, the most condensed and coherent discussion on the topic is to be found in the chapters 36 and 37 of the third book. At the beginning of chapter 37 one comes across a straightforward definition of the soul:

> The soul of man is a certain divine light, created after the image of the Word, [which is] the cause of causes and first example, and the substance of God, figured by a seal whose character is the eternal Word. Also, the soul of man is a certain divine substance, indivisible and present in every part of the body, so produced by an incorporeal author that it depends on the power of the agent only, not on the bosom of the matter.
>
> *Anima humana est lux quaedam divina ad imaginem verbi, causae causarum, primi exemplaris creata, substantia Dei sigilloque figurata cuius character est verbum aeternum. Item anima humana est substantia quaedam divina, individua et tota cuique corporis parti praesens, ab incorporeo autore ita producta ut ex agentis virtute solum, non ex materiae gremio dependeat.*[256]

Several points should be made with regard to this definition. First, one finds here the *imago verbi* instead of the *imago mundi* doctrine, indicating once again Agrippa's confusion concerning this question. More importantly, soul is said to be *of the same substance as God* and no ontological difference between them is even hinted at. On the contrary, Agrippa is keen to underline this view by varying the same idea thrice in only a few lines: soul is *lux divina*, *substantia Dei* and, again, *substantia divina*. Clearly, it is in sharp discrepancy with the doctrine of the Church; the Nettesheimer here contradicts Thomas Aquinas almost verbatim. This is how the *Doctor Angelicus* draws a sharp ontological boundary between God and soul:

> I answer that, to say that the soul is of the Divine substance involves a manifest improbability. For, as is clear from what has been said, the human soul is sometimes in a state of potentiality to the act of intelligence—acquires its knowledge somehow from things—and thus has various powers; all of which are incompatible with the Divine Nature, Which is a pure act—receives nothing from any other—and admits of no variety

[256] III 37, *DOP* 514, Tyson 585. From the English translation one does not get clearly what Latin with its cases renders quite straightforwardly: the "cause of causes" and "first exemplar" refer to the Word, whereas the "substance of God," being in the nominative case, refers to the soul.

in itself, as we have proved."[257]

Next, Agrippa states that soul is "produced" by God (*producta*), not created (*facta*), a terminological nuance that should not be taken lightly.[258] Further, the soul being sealed and figured (that is, shaped) by the Word of God is another repetition of the *imago imaginis* doctrine, but, as I said, with respect to its alternative interpretation: that the first *imago Dei* is not the world but the Word. There is an interesting collateral indication here that this ambiguity is not a mere coincidence: James Freake erroneously translates Agrippa's words *ad imaginem verbi* as "created after the image of the *world*." It appears that, for a moment, the two contested and strongly intertwined interpretations of the *imago imaginis* doctrine confused Agrippa's otherwise reliable English translator.

Finally, there is an even more significant implication concealed in the quoted words. I have already shown that the idea of man being the (indirect) image of God is central to Agrippa. However, upon carefully reading this and other passages,[259] one conclusion seems inevitable: in some instances it appears that, when Agrippa says "man," he actually has in mind his *anima* (or *animus*; see below for the terminological distinction). In this view, "man" seems to be primarily his soul; the body comes later and is only of secondary importance. Agrippa, at least here, resonates Ficino's basic conception discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Such a "spiritualist" perspective is perhaps confirmed by Agrippa's occasional reinterpretation, or rewording, of the well-known Biblical *templum Dei* image:

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[257] Aquinas, *Summa theol*. I, *Quest*. 90.1: *Respondeo dicendum quod dicere animam esse de substantia Dei, manifestam improbabilitatem continet. Ut enim ex dictis patet, anima humana est quandoque intelligens in potentia, et scientiam quodammodo a rebus acquirit, et habet diversas potentias, quae omnia aliena sunt a Dei natura, qui est actus purus, et nihil ab alio accipiens, et nullam in se diversitatem habens, ut supra probatum est*. In *DOP* I 49 Agrippa himself uses the term *actus purus* referring to the divine light, but this "actus purus" ends up in the process of emanation as plain visible light.

[258] The general meaning of the verb *producere* in Classical and Medieval Latin is "to lead/bring forward" something that *already exists* (LS, 1455-56; BLS, 738; DCG, 524; NRM, 858). It is very rarely synonymous, and only as a trope, with the verb *facere* (e. g. Plaut. *Rud*. 4, 4, 129: *ego is sum qui te produxi pater*). For Augustine (*Contra Adv. Leg. et Proph*. 1), not even *creare* is synonymous with *facere*: *facere est quod omnino non erat, creare vero est ex eo quod iam erat educendo aliquid constituere* ("To make concerns what did not exist at all; but to create is to make something by bringing forth something from what was already"). For Aquinas, however, the two terms appear to be synonymous; see *Summa Theol*. I, *Quaest*. 45, a. 1. Agrippa too uses *creare* and *facere* synonymously.

[259] For instance, III 36, *DOP* 507, Tyson 579: *cuius imaginis animus humanus imago est*; *DOP* 508, Tyson 579: *animum hominis verbo Dei sigillatum necesse fuit*, etc.

contrary to the Apostle Paul, who refers to the whole man and, more specifically, to man's body as a "temple of God" (or the Holy Ghost),[260] Agrippa in several instances restricts this image to the pure soul.[261]

Agrippa's tendency to identify man with his soul has its roots above all in the *Pimander,* the first of the Hermetic discourses, a text of fundamental importance for the German humanist and his theological thought.[262] It provides the Hermetic account of man's creation, according to which man is consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) with God, immortal, and entirely spiritual in nature: God "gave birth to a man *like himself*" (ἀπεκύησεν ἄνθρωπον ἑαυτῷ ἴσον; *hominem sibi similem*) and man "had the father's image" (τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς εἰκόνα ἔχων; *patrisque sui ferebat imaginem*).[263] Man lost his immortality only *after* the fall into the material world, which the *Pimander* describes as a loving embrace of man and the nature, but this loss was only partial: "Because of this, unlike any other living thing on earth, mankind is twofold—in the body mortal but immortal in the essential man" (τὸν οὐσιώδη ἄνθρωπον; *hominem substantialem*).[264] The crucial expression here is "the essential man," which implies that the "true" man is the one that existed *prior to* the fall, and that he is mortal only "in the body" (διὰ τὸ σῶμα; *propter corpus*)—a wording that leaves no room for the assumption that the material body is intrinsic to the human being.

However, there is a contradiction in this view vis-à-vis Agrippa's definition of soul that needs to be addressed. On the one hand, man is said to be an indirect image of God; on the other, he is primarily soul and a divine substance. As such, man should be identical with God and not his *imago*. How to

[260] I Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Cor 6:19.
[261] E.g. III 55, *DOP* 566, Tyson 643: *Abstinentia…quasi templum Dei reddit animum* ("Abstinence … makes the soul a temple of God"). See also *DOP* 507–8, 568, 579.
[262] He lectured on it in Pavia in 1515 and referred to it at length in several works, such as the *De originali peccato* and *Dialogus de homine*.
[263] *CH* I, 12 in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 3; *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 6; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 10. The more accurate translation for ἑαυτῷ ἴσον is "equal to himself": see LSJ, 839. s.v. ἴσος.
[264] *CH* I, 15 in Copenhaver, Hermetica, 3; *Hermetica*, 3; *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 7; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 12.

account for this contradiction? In my opinion, it arises because Agrippa conflates two distinct sets of terms, Christian and Neoplatonic. In the Christian context, the term *imago* implies a reflection which, in man's case, does not fully share the identity of the reflected object.[265] On the other hand, this term in Agrippa's use appears to be synonymous with "emanation" in the Neoplatonic sense and hence implies an ontological identity as discussed throughout Chapter Two. That man is an *imago imaginis Dei* means that he is created after the world in the process of divine emanation in which every level of emanation retains its consubstantiality with its source. In contrast to its Christian use, this is how the term *imago* is interpreted in the *Corpus Hermeticum*.

Embodiment and body

That soul is "produced" by God means that it "proceeds" from Him in a gradual process of emanation:[266] proceeding from God, soul is joined to "this grosser body" (*corpori huic iungitur crassiori*), but only after it is wrapped in "a celestial and aerial body" (*coelesti aëroque involvitur corpusculo*) which the Platonists call "the ethereal vehicle of the soul" (*aethereum animae vehiculum*). Through this medium (*hoc medio*) soul is then infused into the middle point of the heart, which is the center of man's body, and from there it is spread through all the parts and members of the body. From that point on, the interaction between soul and body is regulated by two complementary principles: extension and obedience. It is the property of the soul, being moveable of itself, to extend itself into matter, which obeys the soul's commands and is set into motion accordingly.[267] Had Agrippa known of it at his time, he could have given an analogy with electric current that energizes the appliance.

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[265] Aquinas, *Summa Theol*. Ia q. 93 a. 1 ad 2: "And since the perfect likeness to God cannot be except in an identical nature, the Image of God exists in His first-born Son; as the image of the king is in his son, who is of the same nature as himself: whereas it exists in man as in an alien nature" (*Et quia similitudo perfecta Dei non potest esse nisi in identitate naturae, imago Dei est in filio suo primogenito sicut imago regis in filio sibi connaturali; in homine autem sicut in aliena natura*).
[266] III 37, *DOP* 514, Tyson 585.
[267] I 14, *DOP* 112–13, Tyson 44. This relation corresponds to *obedientia* of matter in general to the World Soul (I 12, *DOP* 108–9, Tyson 37). The principles of extension and obedience are also important for understanding Agrippa's views on magic, since he holds that the soul can extend beyond the body and thus exert its influence on other objects too. I discuss this issue in Chapter Four.

This process, he explains, is necessary for all those souls that are destined to dwell in the created world: since man is the image of the world, he replicates the very process of its creation, which implies the infusion of the World Soul (*Anima mundi*) into the World Body (*Corpus mundi*).[268] Significantly, Agrippa uses the image of dressing (*induere*), as well as the phrase "corporeal man" (*homo corporeus*), which both underline his notion of the "grosser body" and the duality of man: *Animum igitur hominis, sic verbo Dei sigillatum, necesse fuit etiam corporeum hominem … induere*. ("Therefore it was necessary that the soul of man, thus sealed by the Word of God, should put on also the corporeal man.")[269] The context of this statement is important for a better understanding of its implications. Agrippa explains why it is that man is privileged over all other creatures and compares him to God: just as God comprehends the created world in his thought and governs it, so man comprehends and governs his body and for that reason only he has been embodied. What one finds here, thus, are the two clearly expressed, parallel opposites of God–the world and man–body.

If my reading of this passage is correct, it appears that, for Agrippa, there are actually two different meanings—or modes—of "man": the "inward" man, who seems to be non-different from his soul, and the "corporeal man," who is barely anything more than an external garment—a "spacesuit" of sorts for living in a hostile environment.[270] This *homo corporeus* is the seat of the external and internal senses, organs, and members, through which, as if through an interface, the soul interacts with the world.

Perrone Compagni traces back this idea to Pico della Mirandola (*Heptaplus* 5:6), but there is, in

[268] III 36, *DOP* 508, Tyson 579. The classical formulation of the doctrine of embodiment that Agrippa deploys here is Plato, *Timaeus* 42d–43c. Plato describes how the task of creating bodies was relegated by God to "the younger gods" (τοῖς νέοις παρέδωκεν θεοῖς). The notion of the *Corpus mundi* as deployed in Ficino and Agrippa also goes back to *Timaeus* 36e–37a.
[269] *Ibid*. Freake renders *animus* as "mind," thus contributing to the overall terminological confusion in the work. Just in passing, I note that a similar phrase, *homo carnalis*, is used by Thomas à Kempis (e.g. *De imitatione Christi* I, 6,2); in my MA thesis I explored the possibility of an indirect influence of his notion of *imitatio Christi* and other ideas of the *devotio moderna* on Agrippa; see Putnik, *The Pious Impiety*, 54–65.
[270] Aquinas, *Summa theol*. Ia q. 75 a. 4 *co*. and *ad* 1, commenting on 2 Cor. 4:16 where St. Paul speaks of an "inward" and "outward" man, explicitly rejects the identification of soul with man as a whole. However, this duality is there in Paul and it has been subject to various exegetical attempts.

my opinion, an even more important conceptual and terminological parallel, that with the *Corpus Hermeticum* VII.[271] In this short discourse one finds exactly the same imagery of clothes related to body and soul. In addition to the stern observation that "the soul [is] shut up in the body, preventing it from anchoring in the havens of deliverance" (τὴν ἐν τῷ σώματι κατακεκλεισμένην ψυχήν; *animamque…corporis vinclis inclusam*), Hermes advises his son in the following way:

> But first you must *rip off the tunic that you wear*, the *garment* of ignorance, the foundation of vice, the bonds of corruption, the dark cage, the living death, the sentient corpse, the portable tomb (…). Such is *the odious tunic you have put on*. It strangles you and drags you down with it so that you will not hate its viciousness, not look up and see the fair vision of truth and the good that lies within, not understand the plot that it has plotted against you when it made insensible the organs of sense, made them inapparent and unrecognized for what they are, blocked up with a great load of matter.[272]

"Ripping off the tunic one wears," "the garment of ignorance," "a great load of matter that blocks up the organs of sense"—these images closely match Agrippa's own metaphor of *induere*,[273] even though he is much more ambivalent—and *has* to be as a self-professed Christian—in passing a judgment on such a state of affairs. In the dualist perspective of the *Hermetica*, body is evidently a burden to be dispensed with. In his own account of the formation of body Agrippa does not go that far, but elsewhere, as I will show, he exhibits more clearly his anti-corporeal attitude, such as when he states that "one who wants to enter this sanctuary of secrets must die, I say die to the world, and to the flesh, and all senses, and to the whole man animal" (*Mori enim oportet, mori, inquam, mundo & carni, ac*

[271] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 24; *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 54; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 47. Speaking of Pico, however, it should be mentioned that this idea appears in his *Oratio* too, where he speaks of man as "a divinity clothed with human flesh" (*numen humana carne circumvestitum*); see Pico, *On the Dignity of Man*, 6. Describing the man who has attained the state of pure intellect, Pico says that he is "ignorant of the body, banished to the innermost places of the mind" (*corporis nescium, in penetralia mentis relegatum*).

[272] *CH* VII 2–3, Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 24; *Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander*, 55; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 47. The italics in the translation mine. I give only the clothes-imagery parts in Greek and Ficino's Latin: περιρρήξασθαι ὃν φορεῖς χιτῶνα, τὸ τῆς ἀγνωσίας ὕγασμα ... Τοιοῦτός ἐστιν ὃν ἐνεδύσω χιτῶνα; *vestem quam circumfers exuere, indumentum inscitie … Huiuscemodi est, quo circumtegeris, umbraculum inimicum*. In other words, body is equaled to *chiton* (a sewn garment worn by both sexes in ancient Greece).

[273] In Ficino's translation of the above-quoted sentence one even finds a compound verb of the same root: *induere* / *exuere* = to dress / undress. The same verb is used in a similar context by the Apostle Paul in Eph 4:24: ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ Θεὸν κτισθέντα; *induite novum hominem qui secundum Deum creatus est* ("And that ye *put on* the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"). However, Paul's concept of *homo novus* differs considerably from the Hermetic one, as I discuss in Chapter Five.

sensibus omnibus, ac toti homini animali).[274]

Agrippa's description of the reverse process—death—shows similar traits of the dualist perspective. To repeat it, the Nettesheimer understands the process of embodiment as infusing the soul into the body and fixing the one to the other by the medium of spirit or the "ethereal vehicle." So, what happens when this bond is broken?

> But when by a disease or some mischief these middle things [i.e. the bonds of spirit] are dissolved or fail, then the soul herself by these middle things recollects herself and flows back into the heart which was the first receptacle of the soul; but the spirit of the heart failing, and heat being extinct, it leaves him and man dies, and *the soul flies away with this celestial vehicle*, and her genii, keepers, and daemons follow her on the way out and carry her to the judge, where sentence being pronounced God quietly leads forth the good souls to glory, and the fierce demon drags the evil souls to punishment.
>
> *Quando vero per morbum malumve solvuntur vel deficiunt haec media, tunc anima ipsa per singula media sese recolligit refluitque in cor, quod primum erat animae susceptaculum; cordis vero deficiente spiritu extinctoque calore, ipsum deserit et moritur homo et evolat anima cum aethereo hoc vehiculo illamque egressam genii custodes daemonesque sequuntur et ducunt ad iudicem, ubi lata sententia bonas animas Deus tranquille perducit ad gloriam, malas violentus daemon trahit ad poenam.*[275]

In this passage, which gives a glimpse of Agrippa's views on eschatology (at least as delineated in the *De occulta philosophia*) one finds several interesting points. First of all, death is a process precisely reverse to that of embodiment: the soul takes the same steps, but backwards, and leaves the body carried away by the same ethereal medium that enabled the bond in the first place. The idea that the recollection of the soul, its return to the heart and the subsequent abandonment of the body all take place through the medium of spirit ("by these middle things"—*per singula media*) implies that there is *no direct contact* between soul and body. They are, so to speak, separate hypostases, with one of them

[274] *Epist*. V 19, in Agrippa, *Opera* II, 880 (*Aurelio ab Aqua-pendente*). Perrone Compagni's edition does not contain this letter as an appendix, but Tyson 681 does. Of course, the attitude of corporeal mortification expressed here still cannot be said to be non-Christian.

[275] III 37, *DOP* 514–15, Tyson 585. Italics in the translation mine. I had to make considerable changes in Freake's translation of this important section. First of all, he renders *violentus daemon* as "the Devil," a solution clearly loaded with theological bias. Next, he translates *genii custodes daemonesque* in singular as "the Genius *his* keeper and the demon," while erroneously attributing these to man instead of the soul. It is *the free soul* that these entities escort to the judge, as is clear from the Latin original. To avoid confusion, I refer to the soul here as feminine.

becoming ontologically insignificant upon death: in the soul's *post mortem* perspective sketched here body does not figure at all. There is a final trial before God, but the result of the trial, whether good or bad, pertains only to the soul, who is taken either to glory or to punishment.[276] There is not a mention of the bodily resurrection; moreover, there is strong indication that the final trial is *individual* and takes place *immediately* upon the person's death (this is clearly emphasized by the temporal conjunction *quando*).[277]

Of equal importance is that the quoted passage, in my opinion, does not support Paola Zambelli's suggestion that Agrippa could have had some adherence to the Radical Reformation doctrine of psychopannychism ("sleep of souls"), against which Jean Calvin strongly reacted in 1534 with his work *Psychopannychia*.[278] What one finds here is an account of an active soul which is being escorted by her attendants, and it should be read in tune with another statement from *DOP* III 41, where Agrippa says that "separated souls retain the fresh memory of those things which they did in this life and their will."[279] With the pronounced role of *genii*, *custodes*, and *daemones*, the whole passage reads as Platonic, which Perrone Compagni notes by identifying the original references in Plato's *Phaedrus* (246–48), *Phaedo* (107d), and *Timaeus* (41e),[280] but Donald Tyson finds another interesting

[276] This idea undoubtedly goes back to Plato, *Republic*, 614b–618b, where the philosopher narrates about the Armenian soldier Er, who was wounded in battle, left his body, and spent twelve days wandering around. He saw the heavenly judges and witnessed the trial. Agrippa could have found the same idea in Ficino's translations of *Gorg*. 523 E f., 524 E–525 B, 526 B–C, and *Phaedo* 107 D, 113 D.

[277] Elsewhere, however, Agrippa speaks of the Day of Judgment (e.g. III 41, *DOP* 534: *quia enim animarum iudicium ad extremum diem dilatum est*). A more detailed examination of his views on eschatology will follow in Chapter Five.

[278] Zambelli, "Magic and Radical Reformation in Agrippa," 92–103. In truth, she is not too insistent on this thesis, but alludes in that direction when, for example, she comments on Agrippa's words (*DOP* III 41): "the common opinion of theologians is that funeral prayers and rites cannot be of any help to the guilty in the cave of Dis" in the following way: "The classicistic style and the cave of Dis are intended to disguise a statement which is completely anti-Roman" (*Ibid*., 102).

[279] *DOP* 524, Tyson 595: *animas separatas eorum quae in hac vita gesserunt nondum extinctam retinere memoriam atque voluntatem*. For a diametrically opposite view see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol*. IIIa, suppl., q. 70, a.1, resp.: *potentiae sensitivae et aliae similes non manent in anima separata*; […] *in anima enim separata manet efficacia influendi iterum hujusmodi potentias si corpori uniatur*—that is, only after the resurrection.

[280] *DOP* 514. On the nature of these attendants see III 22, *DOP* 464–66, Tyson 527–29, chapter title *Triplicem uniuscuiusque hominis custodem esse et a quibus singuli procedant* ("That there is a threefold keeper of man, and from whence each of them proceed").

parallel, that with the *Asclepius*.[281] There one finds a similar account of the soul who leaves the body and "passes to the jurisdiction of the chief demon who weighs and judges its merit, and if he finds it faithful and upright, he lets it stay in places suitable to it. But if he sees the soul smeared with the stains of wrongdoing and dirtied with vice, he sends it tumbling down…to the depths below."[282]

To sum up, the textual evidence presented so far seems to suggest that the author of the *De occulta philosophia* more or less directly sticks to the Platonic/Hermetic duality of man, whereby the ontological importance of soul outweighs that of body and reduces it to a mere *carcer animi*.

The perspective of the *Dialogus de homine*

If in Agrippa's occult encyclopedia, despite its equivocal mode of argumentation, one finds numerous elements of a dualist anthropology, the situation becomes more complicated with one of Agrippa's Italian treatises—the short, unfinished *Dialogus de homine*. This dialogue, written in 1515/16 (see the section on sources in the Introduction), reveals s strong influence of Pico della Mirandola and Lodovico Lazzarelli on Agrippa in his Italian period, as demonstrated by Zambelli, Perrone Compagni, and Hanegraaff.[283] Perrone Compagni supposes that the dialogue could have contained the same material as Agrippa's now lost course on the *Pimander* taught at the University of Pavia.[284] Much in line with the *De occulta philosophia* III 36, it expounds man's position in the universe. Man is said to be a "smaller world" since he incorporates all the ingredients of the greater world around him: the four elements, vegetative life like plants, sensual perception like animals, celestial spirit, angelic mind, and,

[281] Tyson 586. Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 84: *Asclepius*, ch. 28.
[282] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 84. From Agrippa's point of view, the "chief demon" of the *Asclepius* could hardly be identified with the Christian Devil, and this is why I said in n. 275 that Freake's rendition of *violentus daemon* as "the Devil" might be inappropriate.
[283] Zambelli's "Introduzione" in Agrippa, *Dialogus de homine*, 55, and her annotations throughout the text; Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo in Agrippa*, 37–51; Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 17–20.
[284] Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo in Agrippa*, 37. Speaking of this link, it is interesting to note Agrippa's spelling error, if it is an error at all, in *Dialogus de homine*, 46v: *hoc est quod Hermes innuit in primandro* ("this is what Hermes agrees with in the *Pimander*"). If "primandro" can be understood as Agrippa's παρετυμολογία (*primus* + ἀνήρ, ἀνδρός, "man"), it would mean that he interpreted Pimander, or Poimandres, as the primordial Man.

finally, *dei similitudo*—resemblance of God Himself.[285]

The problem arises when Christophore, Agrippa's interlocutor in the dialogue, voices his opinion—which he shares with the writer of the *De occulta philosophia*— that "man, the smaller world, is an image of the greater world. Namely, the greater world is the image of God, so man is not the image of God but is formed after an image of God."[286] Surprisingly, Agrippa tells him that he got it all wrong. Explicitly contradicting his *imago imaginis* argumentation from the *De occulta philosophia* (e.g. I 37, II 27 or III 36), he replies that man is not *formed after an image* of God (that is, after the world) but that he *is the true image* of God (*hominem non tam ad imaginem dei formatum, quam esse ipsam veram dei imaginem*).[287] There is a strong semantic opposition here between the infinitives *formatum esse* and plain *esse,* and also between the subject *imaginem* and the adverbial *ad imaginem*. It eliminates the world as the first image and the emanational medium between God and man.[288]

Things get even more complicated when Christophore, apparently trying to show his agreement, adds that "the common opinion of theologians is that our soul is the image of God" (*est communis theologorum sententia, quod anima nostra est imago dei*) which bears three faculties: will, intellect, and memory. Reacting to this, Agrippa asserts that "it is not *the soul* that is the image of God, but *man* is the image of God" (*Non igitur nunc, quomodo anima sit imago dei, sed quomodo homo sit*

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[285] *Dialogus de homine*, 46r: *Homo microcosmus hoc est minor mundus dicitur quum in seipso habeat totum quod in maiori continetur: nam in ipso mixtum ex elementis corpus, celestis spiritus, plantarum vita vegetative, brutorum sensus et ratio, angelica mens et atque dei similitude conspiciuntur*. This is a direct paraphrase of Pico's *Heptaplus* V, 6, of a paragraph which the exalted author concludes with Hermes' words: "A great miracle, oh Asclepius, is man!"; see Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, tr. Douglas Carmichael, with an introduction by Paul J. W. Miller (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 134–35.

[286] *Ibid*., 49r: *Intelligo quia homo minor mundus imago sit mundi maioris. Mundus autem maior imago dei, atque hinc homo non imago dei, sed ad imaginem dei formatus est*. The translation of all the quotes from *Dialogus de homine* is mine.

[287] *Dialogus de homine*, 49v.

[288] The difference between *imago Dei* and *ad imaginem Dei* was discussed by Aquinas in *Summa Theol*. Ia q. 93 a. 1 ad 2, but with a different conclusion: for Aquinas, only Christ, "the First-Born of creatures is the perfect Image of God, reflecting perfectly that of which He is the Image [this is a reference to Col. 1:15], and so He is said to be the "Image" (*imago*) and never "to the image" (*ad imaginem*). But man is said to be both "image" by reason of the likeness; and "to the image" by reason of the imperfect likeness." In other words, man's *imago Dei* does not imply an identical nature with God but exists in him "as in an alien nature" (*sicut in aliena natura*). It appears that "Agrippa" from the dialogue supports this view.

imago dei).[289] Needless to say, this view is in direct collision with a number of statements from the *De occulta philosophia* (such as III 37, quoted above), where Agrippa explicitly designates *soul* as an image of divinity, not mentioning man at all. Here, in his clarification of this monist—and thus apparently Christian—perspective, Agrippa states, quite surprisingly for a *Platonicus*, that the Aristotelians understand this point more correctly than the Platonists:

> And if you say, together with those theologians of yours, that this *imago* pertains only to the essential or inward man, whom the Platonists define as the soul using the body as an instrument, the Peripatetics were more correct in asserting that man is a compound made of soul and body—a judgment that is professed as sacrosanct by the Catholic Church.
>
> *Et si tu dixeris cum tuis theologis hanc imaginem non nisi de homine substantiali sive interiori dictum esse, quem platonici diffiniunt esse animam utentem corpore ut instrumento, tamen rectius peripatetici locuti sunt, dicentes hominem esse illud suppositum, quod constat de anima et corpore, quem sententiam sacrosanctam confitetur catholica ecclesia*.[290]

He then adds that, just as man is a unity of rational soul and flesh, in the same way Christ is God and man in one (*sicut anima rationalis et caro unus est homo, ita deus et homo unus est christus*). What Christophore says about pure soul pertains more to angels than to man: angels are closer to divine nature and cognizance than men, and yet—it is man, not angel, who is said to be the image of God. This is precisely so by virtue of man's mixed nature, since angels lack grosser bodies and thus cannot symbolize the totality of the world.

What must puzzle the student of Agrippa's thought is, once again, the question of chronology. Most of the above-mentioned sections from the *De occulta philosophia*, in which the German occultist explicates the *imago imaginis* doctrine and hints at a dualist anthropology appear in both versions, the 1510 Würzburg draft and the 1533 published work. Yet, between these two works one comes across the *Dialogus de homine*, which seems to affirm quite different views: the *homo imago Dei* doctrine and a

[289] *Ibid*., 49v. Italics in the translation mine.
[290] *Dialogus de homine*, 49v–50r. I translate *suppositum* as an equivalent of *compositum*, which is confirmed by LS, 1815, s.v. *sup-pono*, II A.

monist anthropology. How to account for such a discrepancy?

First of all, it should not be overlooked that the *De homine* is a dialogue. Perrone Compagni rightly points out that by casting his argumentation in the form of a dialogue, with its own rules as a literary genre, the author inevitably makes his stance more difficult to elucidate.[291] In other words, Agrippa the interlocutor thus becomes a sort of Socrates, who appears to be arguing in one direction, but always with an open end in the discussion. It looks like he is persistent in his argumentation, but, as I will show, he changes it in the course of the dialogue to such an extent that by the end he approaches the dualist perspective of the *De occulta philosophia*. In fact, the *Dialogus de homine* is a remarkable piece of writing in that the two characters appearing in it clearly stand for the two sides of Agrippa's own ambivalence: in contrast to "Agrippa," who is prone to a Hermeticized Christian anthropology as advocated by Pico in his *Heptaplus*, "Christophore" represents the dominant views of the *De occulta philosophia*.

Is body good or bad?

Paola Zambelli points to Pico della Mirandola as the main source of Agrippa's argumentation in the *Dialogus de homine*. She identifies enough textual similarities, including long, uncredited quotations, for deriving such a conclusion. Agrippa's exposition of man's nature indeed corresponds to the *Heptaplus* IV and V, where Pico identifies man as the *imago Dei* and defines him as a unity of body and soul.[292] As Paul Miller notes, Pico's understanding of *imago Dei* is based on the idea that man unites the three worlds in his own nature: "Man is made of body and soul, and so literally embodies or

[291] Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo in Agrippa*, 37: "L'adattamento in veste dialogica mascherava la struttura inevitabilmente discontinua del commento originario, giustificandola con le regole genere letterario." It is worth repeating here her reference to Erica Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard U.P., 1995), 3, who characterizes this genre in the following way: "The necessity of maintaining a literary conceit prevents the author from pursuing a tightly constructed, sustained, linear argument […] Indeed, the rules of the art absolve the author from developing a logical argument or presenting logically derived conclusions."

[292] Pico, *Heptaplus,* 118–19, 125, 134–35, etc. As if to sum up Agrippa's own confusion, Pico confesses: "It is a difficult question why man has this privilege of being in the image of God" (134).

reproduces in himself both the angels and physical nature. Thus man has the intermediate place in creation, since he is constituted by the combination of extremes."[293] Consequently, the scheme of salvation in Pico's thought is not Plotinian but Christian, even though he employs Neoplatonic terminology: man's ultimate purpose and goal, a return to God, "we do not make, but receive."[294] In such a perspective, man's body, both symbolically and ontologically linked to Christ's incarnation, plays a significant and constructive role. It is an integral part of man, it participates in man's redemption and salvation, and cannot be dispensed with.

Following Pico, Agrippa ascertains that man is superior to angels in that he, like God, embraces the entire nature, not as the beginning of everything (*omnium principium*) but as "the middle link and bond of everything" (*omnium medium vinculum et nodus*).[295] Asked by Christophore whether man's similitude with God is reflected in the shape of his body, Agrippa rejects possible anthropomorphic insinuations behind the question but confirms that *figura corporis* is distantly (*procul*) related to God's "intrinsic qualities" as their *signum*; however, this relation is entirely beyond our rational comprehension.[296]

Finally—and this is the peak of Agrippa's argumentation—the participation of body in similitude with God is made clear beyond any doubt by the incarnation of Christ, who redeemed man and recovered him from his fall "through the mystery of regeneration" (*per regenerationis mysterium*).[297] This is the same regeneration of the "inward" man as opposed to the corruption of the "outward" man that St. Paul speaks about in 2 Cor. 4:16, a quote that Agrippa uses to defend the role of

[293] *Ibid*., "Introduction" by Paul J. W. Miller, xv.
[294] *Ibid*., xvii, referring to *Heptaplus*, VII, 150–51.
[295] Agrippa, *Dialogus de homine*, 51r. Another mode of containing everything is having knowledge of it (50v–51r): whatever one knows is in a way contained by that person. Even in that sense men are better off than angels, who lack the experience of the grossest aspects of the world, i.e. of the physical body.
[296] *Ibid*., 52r: *Sed est in deo aliquid intrinsecum unde defluunt hec universa, quod tamen ab illorum essentia figuraque procul habes; sed cum deus ipse nos suas imagines sibique similes esse voluit, eiusmodi membra artus et figuras…tanquam latentium suarum virtutum ac humane menti incomprehensibilium signa construxit.*
[297] *Ibid*., 56r.

body in man's salvational drama.

However, Christophore does not seem content with Agrippa's explanations and keeps challenging him with a growing dissent. The culminating part of the debate concerns death: "You speak a lot", says Christophore, "but I don't believe you. If man is so close to God, if his dignity is above all other creatures, why is he mortal instead of being incorruptible like angels, the sky, and stars?"[298] Agrippa's response amounts to what I called the ontological downgrading of death, although it could also be seen as its apology. Man is superior to angels precisely *on account of his mortality* since he embraces both mortal and immortal nature, whereas angels are "only" immortal (*ex sola immortali natura formati sunt*). Man shares with angels the inner spiritual nature (by having *mens*), whereas they lack what he has—a mortal body. In other words, both his composition and sphere of experience are more universal that those of angels. This includes man's experience of death, which is altogether inaccessible to angels and which thus make man nobler and better than angels, as confirmed by the passion of Christ.

However, Christophore remains dissatisfied and launches a new attack, corresponding to various ideas appearing in the *De occulta philosophia*, but more explicitly based on Agrippa's exegetical treatise *De originali peccato*:

> Based on my faith and the sacred scriptures, I am certain that God created man as immortal, but that he later became mortal because he disregarded God's command and ate from the forbidden tree. […] It is thus clear beyond any doubt that mortality is the result of the original sin, whereas you are perversely trying to misinterpret it as man's praise and virtue, and say that it makes man nobler.
>
> *Ego certus sum ex fide et scripturis sanctis quoniam creavit deus hominem immortalem, qui postea prevaricatus divinum preceptum comedens de ligno vetito ... factus est mortalis*. […] *Ex quo sufficienter et clarissime constat mortalitatem esse effectum peccati originalis, quam tu sinistre conaris torquere homini ad laudem et virtutem, atque per hanc hominem nobiliorem esse*.[299]

[298] *Ibid*., 53r: *Tu quidem multa dicis, sed ego tibi parum credo. Si tanta est hominis ad deum vicinitas, si tanta hominis super omnem creaturam dignitas, cur mortalis, ac non potius incorruptibilis, ut angeli celum stelle?*
[299] *Ibid*., 54r.

Agrippa's defense of mortality and embodiment is interesting as it partly embraces the esoteric doctrine of "rays" as developed by Al-Kindi and later extensively employed by Marsilio Ficino. Moreover, it is in this part of the dialogue that Agrippa makes a subtle turn towards a dualist anthropology. God created man with a twofold nature: one is divine and immortal, the other corporeal and mortal. Furthermore, God endowed man with mind, spirit, and speech, as well as with the ability to contemplate and obey Him, so that man could attract and "drag down the rays of divine light" (*ut…ad se divini luminis radios traheret*) which would permanently keep death away from him, although he received a mortal body.[300] And he was admonished that he would be subject to dying if he did not act accordingly. In other words, the mortal side of man "did not count" as long as he obeyed God's commands and worshiped Him. His mortality was mere potentiality, not actuality. However, it turned to actuality once man transgressed divine commands and "embraced the body" (*corpus amplectens*).[301] Man fell down to the dark sphere of concupiscence and become subject to dying.

At this point, just when it looks like Agrippa has finally won the debate, he makes a strange twist.[302] Sensing in Christophore's words fear of death, Agrippa tells him that there is no reason for such fear since *death does not exist*. It is no more real than Scylla, Hydra, Cerberus or any other monster from mythical antiquity. In response to his confused friend's inquiry Agrippa suddenly seems to have forgotten everything he said about body. Death exists neither for the living (since they are obviously alive) nor for the dead, because once you die, "you will definitely not exist" (*tu namque non*

[300] *Ibid*., 54v–56r.
[301] The idea of "embracing the body" can be interpreted in two ways. One is Hermetic, in the sense of bodily garments of the soul discussed above. However, Zambelli, *ibid*., 67 n. 41, suggests that this could be an allusion to Agrippa's *De originali peccato*, in which he interprets the Fall as a result of the sexual intercourse between man and woman. In that—literal—sense, the embraced body is that of woman.
[302] Agrippa, *Dialogus de homine*, 57r–57v.

eris)![303] "Does it mean that we migrate to non-existence?", asks Christophore, who is probably no less perplexed than the reader. In Agrippa's reply, all of a sudden, body ceases to be important and he reverts to the Hermetic cloths-image: "You will migrate neither to non-existence nor to death, but to the very immortality. But you should, as Hermes says, *undress that garment* that you wear around yourself." (*Nec in nichillum, nec in mortem, sed in ipsam immortalitatem migrabis; oportet autem te (ut inquid hermes) vestem quam circumfers exuere*). Not only does one find the same verb that Ficino used in his translation of the cloth-image passage (*exuere*), but Agrippa goes on to quote the same lines from the *Corpus Hermeticum* VII that I quoted above, strongly arguing for the *corpus animae carcer* doctrine: body is a garment of evil, living death, sensible corps etc.

In an even more spectacular twist of exegesis, he directly links this ultimately anti-corporeal passage to Christ's words from Matt. 16:24: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."[304] That cross, explains Agrippa, is nothing else but "this material body, which we wear as a sort of cross. We should *get rid of it* and *leave it*, so that we could return to the pristine immortality together with Christ" (*quo crux nil aliud est quam corpus hoc materiale, quod in similitudine crucis geritur. Hoc nos abnegare et relinquere oportet, ut cum christo ad pristina mortalitatem revertamur*).[305] As if to nail down the argument, he quotes the Apostle Paul's words from Phil. 1:23: *cupio dissolvi et esse cum christo* ("For I am in a strait betwixt two, *having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ*"). In other words, in order to be with Christ, one must await for the dissolution, the separation of the soul from the body!

[303] One is tempted to see in these words a link to Zambelli's hypothesis of Agrippa's hidden adherence to panpsychonychism, but at that point of time (1515/16) this controversy is still far from blossoming, and besides, it appears that Agrippa has something else in mind.

[304] English Bible quotes throughout this work are given according to King James Version; see https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Matthew-Chapter-16/ [last accessed: 18/10/2016].

[305] *Ibid*., 57v. Italics in the translation mine. Although Zambelli suggests no emendations in her *apparatus criticus*, it is obvious that *ad pristina mortalitatem* should read *ad pristinam immortalitatem*. The former makes no sense, both grammatically and theologically.

To sum up, the reader is tempted to conclude that, as the dialogue approaches its preserved end, Agrippa and Christophore are getting closer in their positions, with Christophore boasting an unexpected win, since his interlocutor has gone a long way from the eulogy of death and corporeality to their negation. Reverting to the *De occulta philosophia*, one notices a similar ambivalence, albeit in a subtler form: even though, as discussed above, the author of the magical summa tends to see human nature in the light of Neoplatonic/Hermetic polarity, he does not denigrate body entirely and consistently. In fact, much of Book Two is dedicated to body and its harmonious proportions, which Agrippa clearly sees as *vestigia divinitatis*. In fact, he explicitly claims in *DOP* II 27 that the perfection of body marks the perfection of soul.

In his essay "Better Than Magic: Cornelius Agrippa and Lazzarellian Hermetism" Wouter Hanegraaff emphasizes Agrippa's indebtedness to Lodovico Lazzarelli and his interpretation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (see Chapter One, the overview of scholarship). In this context, he briefly examines the *Dialogus de homine* and points out that Agrippa takes basic lines of his argumentation in the dialogue straight from Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis*.[306] Thus, for example, Agrippa's differentiation between the concepts of *imago dei* and *ad imaginem dei* goes back directly to Lazzarelli.[307] Hanegraaff also observes that Agrippa firmly insists on the notion of man—and not the soul—as an image of God. However, he does not say anything about the changing course of Agrippa's argumentation in the dialogue and the evident tension between the Christian and Hermetic paradigms of human nature that I demonstrated in my analysis of the text.[308] Nevertheless, Hanegraaff's linking of Agrippa to Lazzarelli

[306] Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 18.

[307] *Crater Hermetis*, 18.2: "For we are the image of God, as may be read in the Sacred Scriptures—although many people assert that there is a difference between being after an image and being an image: but I have discovered that they mean the same thing" (Hanegraaff and Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*, 221). However, as I show above, Agrippa claims straightforwardly that they *do not* mean the same thing (*Dialogus de homine*, 49r–49v), although he occasionally switches between the two concepts.

[308] Thus, when he notes that by stating that man really *is* the image of God "Agrippa is…correcting his own position in chapter 22 of the 1510 draft of *De occulta philosophia*" ("Better Than Magic," 18 n. 62), Hanegraaff appears to be

is important in the context already discussed in my overview of scholarship and I explore it in more detail in Chapter Five, which deals with man's fall, salvation, and eschatological perspective.[309]

Vehiculum: the ethereal carrier of the soul

In contrast to his views on soul and body, Agrippa's understanding of the third component of human existence—spirit—is much less marked by ambiguities. In his exposition of spirit he sticks closely to Marsilio Ficino[310] but goes much further than the Florentine humanist in exploring the possibilities offered by this evasive yet all-pervading element of the universe. Following Ficino, Agrippa distinguishes between two types of spirit: cosmic and bodily, which are interrelated in the same way as the World Soul and individual souls.

As I showed above, the two components of what is perceived as the terrestrial human being—soul and body—cannot be joined together directly, but only through a medium. Belonging to different ontological levels, they require a unifying element that is subtler than the physical body and grosser than soul:

> Seeing that the soul is the first thing that is moveable … and the body, or matter, is of itself unfit for motion and by far inferior to the soul, they [*sc*. ancient philosophers] say that there is a need of a more excellent medium (i.e. such a one that may be as it were not a body but almost a soul, or as it were not a soul but almost a body), by which the soul may be joined to the body. They conceive such a medium to be the Spirit of the World, i.e. what we call the quintessence, because it is not from the four elements, but a certain fifth thing, having its being above and besides them.
>
> *Cum vero anima primum mobile sit … corpus vero vel materia per se ad motum inefficax et ab ipsa anima longe degenerans, iccirco ferunt opus esse excellentiori*

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overlooking a number of Agrippa's statements in the final version of his encyclopedia that I refer to above. For instance, in III 36, in a sentence added to the final version, Agrippa states that "human *soul* is the image of the Word."

[309] In that chapter I also explore the possibility that in his consideration of man's corporeal nature Agrippa could also have in mind a sort of spiritual body. For instance, in III 36, *DOP* 509, Tyson 580, one finds an enigmatic statement about the process of uniting with God: the mind draws with itself even the body and leads it forth into a better condition and a heavenly nature, until it is glorified into immortality.

[310] E.g. *Tres libri de vita*, III 3, in Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 254–57: *Talis namque spiritus necessario requiritur tanquam medium, quo anima divina et adsit corpori crassiori et vitam eidem penitus largiatur*. ("For such a spirit is necessarily required as a medium by which the divine soul may both be present to the grosser body and bestow life throughout it.")

> *medio (scilicet quod sit quasi non corpus sed quasi iam anima, sive quasi non anima et quasi iam corpus), quo videlicet anima corpori connectatur. Medium autem tale fingunt esse spiritum mundi, scilicet quam dicimus essentiam quintam, quia non ex quatuor elementis, sed quoddam quintum super illa aut praeter illa subsistens*.[311]

Agrippa further explains that this spirit is related to the World Body in the same way as "our" spirit to the human body (*Hic quidem spiritus talis ferme est in corpore mundi, qualis in humano corpore noster*). Just as the powers of the soul are communicated to the members of the body by spirit, the virtue of the World Soul is diffused through all things by the cosmic quintessence. In other words, the *Spiritus Mundi* is distributed locally (through individual bodies) and universally.[312] Taken in its Ficinian sense, it is as a non-personal substance that pervades the universe and links all its parts both horizontally and vertically.[313] When in its localized form, Agrippa calls it "a celestial and aerial body" (*coeleste aërumque corpusculum*) and "the ethereal vehicle of the soul" (*aethereum animae vehiculum*).[314]

The World Spirit is distributed, or diffused, through the rays of the stars: by the medium of visible celestial bodies (the Sun and other planets) it is conveyed into herbs, stones, metals, objects, animals, and man, to the degree that the receivers render themselves conformable to them. As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, Agrippa takes the ray-theory much further than Ficino, who largely limits it to extracting and manipulating the spirit for medical purposes.

Spirit is the main subject of Ficino's *Tres libri de vita* (Three books on life), especially the well-known Book Three, titled *De vita coelitus comparanda* (On obtaining life from the heavens). As noted

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[311] I 14, *DOP* 113, Tyson 44. Although Perrone Compagni does not make notice of it, this is a direct paraphrase of Ficino's definition of *spiritus* in the *Tres libri de vita* III, 3: *Ipse vero est corpus tenuissimum, quasi non corpus et iam anima. Item quasi non anima et quasi iam corpus*; see Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, tr. and. ed. Kaske and Clark, 256.

[312] Agrippa alternatively calls it "celestial power" (*vis coelestis*) and "middle nature" (*media natura*); see III 37, *DOP* 154, Tyson 585.

[313] As pointed out by Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 12–13, and Kaske–Clark, "Introduction" to *Three Books on Life*, 41–44, the concept of *Spiritus Mundi* is Stoic in origin and tightly linked to the notion of the world as a living being; Walker also points to Plato, *Timaeus*, 30c–31a and Plotinus, *Enn*. IV, iv, 32 as even more important sources of influence on Ficino in articulating his triad of *Corpus Mundi–Anima Mundi–Spiritus Mundi*, which Agrippa takes over from him.

[314] III 37, *DOP* 514, Tyson 585.

already by D. P. Walker, Ficino is cautious not to go too far beyond the safe field of natural magic and medicine; after all, the proclaimed purpose of his *Tres libri de vita* is medicinal and psychological—helping scholars deal with their excessive melancholy by harmonizing their spirits.[315] Thus he first defines spirit in medical and biological terms, as a bodily vapor that is "generated by the heat of the heart out of the more subtle blood."[316] It then flies to the brain, where the soul uses it for the work of the interior and exterior senses. In other words, spirit is at the same time the finest component of blood and the link between soul and body. In Book Three, however, Ficino widens his concept of spirit beyond its biological meaning to denote an all-pervading cosmic substance that links *Anima Mundi* with *Corpus Mundi* in the above-delineated sense. Thus, based on the explanations of both authors, one can assume that Agrippa and Ficino actually postulate *three separate yet interrelated* chains of emanation, as presented in the diagram below (Figure 4).

[315] Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 4. For a general discussion on this work see *ibid*., 2–59, and Kaske–Clark, "Introduction," 42–55. It is interesting to note that this self-limiting scope of Ficino's treatment of spirit has made him subject to over-psychologizing interpretations in our time, especially by the adherents of the so-called archetypal psychology; e.g. Thomas Moore, *The Planets Within. The Astrological Psychology of Marsilio Ficino* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 1990).

[316] Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 111 (I, 2). For a detailed overview of the relationship between spirit and blood in Greek and Roman antiquity see Richard Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought. About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 23–65.

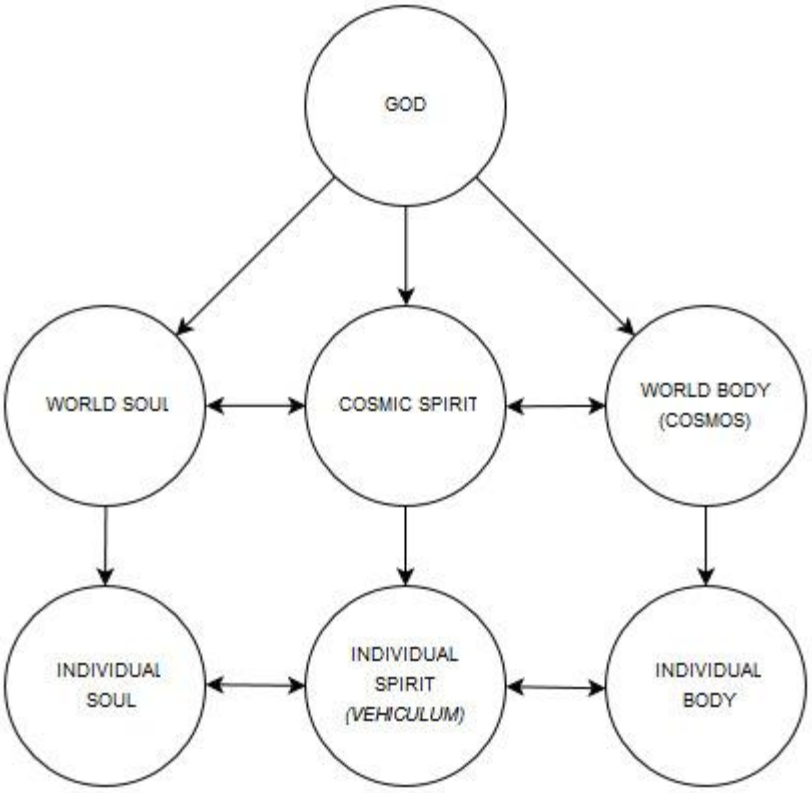

Figure 4: Three parallel chains of emanation

Having being encapsulated in the individual human being, the ethereal *vehiculum* serves two crucial purposes: to provide a link between soul and body, and to secure man's participation in, and communication with, the higher levels of the universe. Just as man's soul (at least her highest part, the *mens*) is of the same nature as the intellectual realm and God himself, so his ethereal vehicle makes him akin to the all-pervasive *Spiritus Mundi*, the third pillar of Agrippa's cosmology, which allows him the possibility of universal communication. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, in which I deal with the nature and functions of spirit in more detail, the *Spiritus Mundi* and its individual embodiment as *vehiculum* are of paramount significance in Agrippa's theory of magic. They provide a cosmic-wide network of communication and influence that works both vertically and horizontally, both universally

and individually.[317]

Furthermore, the threefold participation of man in the cosmos plays a central role in Agrippa's notion of *dignitas hominis*. By being simultaneously present in the realms of intellect, spirit, and matter, the human being is in the unique position of "containing in himself all things which are in God."[318] In other words, Agrippa's *homo imago Dei* doctrine—taken in whatever of its modes of interpretation—is intrinsically tied to his notion of the threefold participation. Man is thus seen to be "everywhere" and is therefore called "the other world." Angels enjoy celestial existence but do not have gross bodies; plants are alive, animals are alive and sensitive, but both lack participation in the higher realms of the soul. Man alone stretches everywhere along the cosmic backbone and draws from this unique position his unique privileges.

In the same way as Ficino in his *Tres libri de vita* makes an effort to detheologize the concept of *spiritus*, thus avoiding potential troubles with the basic tenets of Trinitarian theology, Agrippa too shows that he is aware of the problem and makes a careful distinction: the natural spirit, says he, which is the medium uniting the soul and the flesh (*spiritu naturali, qui est medium per quo unitur anima cum carne*) must not be confused with the Holy Ghost of the Trinity, which is worshipped by Hermes Trismegistos himself.[319] Agrippa's unorthodox position, however, can be hinted in the lines that immediately follow, where he establishes a closer connection between one particular aspect of the corporeal spirit and the divine spirit:

> However, here we speak of the *rational spirit*, which, although it is in some way also corporeal, does not have a gross body, tangible and visible, but a very subtle body which is easily united with the mind, i.e. that superior and divine one which is in us. And let no one wonder if we say that *this spirit is the rational soul*, and that it has or experiences something of corporeality while it is in the body and uses it as an instrument, if this is

[317] Here I find it difficult to resist comparing Agrippa's understanding of cosmic and individual spirit with the contemporary phenomenon of Internet and access to it, upon which modern man's communication capacities depend to an ever increasing extent.
[318] III 36, *DOP* 507, Tyson 580.
[319] III 36, *DOP* 510, Tyson 581.

how you should understand what the Platonists call the ethereal body or vehicle of the soul.

> *Sed hic agitur de spiritu rationali, qui tamen etiam corporeus quodammodo est, non tamen habet corpus crassum, tangibile et visibile, sed corpus subtilissimum et facile unibile cum mente, scilicet superiori et divino illo quod est in nobis. Nec miretur quispiam si animam rationalem dicimus esse illum spiritum et quid corporeum sive habere et sapere aliquid corporeitatis dum est in corpore et illo utitur tamquam instrumento, si modo intellexeritis quod sit apud Platonicos aethereum illud animae corpusculum, ipsius vehiculum*.[320]

Here Agrippa introduces a hitherto not mentioned division of the corporeal spirit into a lower, "natural spirit" and a higher, "rational spirit."[321] It appears, however, that he confuses this "rational spirit" with rational soul (as one of the three constituents of *anima*), or else that he sees these two as a point of junction between the spirit and the soul. If, as I think, the latter is the case, this is an important statement for understanding Agrippa's views on the dynamics of the tripartite human being: the three "pillars" of man's earthly existence—soul, body, and spirit—have identifiable points of merging one into another. I pay more attention to this issue in the next section of this chapter, dedicated to the second anthropological triad.

As I discuss at some length in Chapter Four, Agrippa departs from Ficino's understanding of *spiritus* in two ways. In Ficino's theory of sensation, according to which the sense organ is of the same substance as what is sensed,[322] only sound is directly linked to spirit. As a matter of fact, it is a mode of spirit in it own right, the *spiritus auerus*, as it transmits movement and is able to affect the hearer powerfully and directly. This is why Ficino pays considerable attention to music. On the other hand, he considers eye-sight as static and therefore denies this mode of sensory perception a direct presence of

[320] III 36, *DOP* 510–11, Tyson 581. Italics in the translation mine.
[321] Ficino too mentions a division of corporeal spirit, which in his case displays three types or modes—natural, vital, and animal (*Tres libri de vita*, II, 15; III, 11), but, as Walker points out, he does not work out these distinctions in detail, nor employ them consistently (*Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 5). It appears that Agrippa's "rational spirit" corresponds to Ficino's vital and animal spirits. In the quoted passage Freake mistranslates *spiritus rationalis* as "natural spirit," thus rendering the whole sentence almost unintelligible.
[322] See Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 5–11.

spirit: "As regards sight," says he, "although visual impressions are in a way pure, yet they lack the effectiveness of motion and are usually perceived only as an image, without reality; normally, therefore, they move the soul only slightly."[323] Reflecting on this peculiar difference between hearing and sight, which is supposed to be directly connected to light, the substance of heavens, Walker concludes: "Hearing, then, both puts us in more direct contact with external reality, since sound consists of aerial movements which can actually occur in our spirit, whereas sight merely reproduces surface-images of things."[324] In contrast to Marsilio Ficino, I demonstrate in Chapter Four that Agrippa, much in line with Al-Kindi's theory of rays, views eye-sight as literally *made of spirit* and in this way explains much of the natural magic that he deals with in the first book of his occult philosophy.

The second, even more profound difference is the significance that Agrippa attributes to the notion of *aethereum vehiculum*. Ficino is extremely cautious about this concept: in his *Tres libri de vita*, he neither uses the term *vehiculum* in this context nor explicitly refers to its astral origin as it could easily implicate him in some of the unorthodox doctrines which assume pre-existence of the soul and metempsychosis. D. P. Walker insightfully remarks the following:

> The immense importance which Ficino attributes to astral influence on man's spirit and his acceptance of a cosmic or celestial spirit both suggest that, at least in the *De vita coelitus comparanda*, his conception of the former is not merely the orthodox medicinal one. I think that he has at the back of his mind the Neoplatonic astral body, that is, the aetheric vehicle (ὄχημα) which the soul acquires from the various stars and spheres it passes through during its descent into the earthly body. […] The astral body was for the Neoplatonists primarily a religious conception—an explanation, I think, or justification of theurgic practices, i.e. methods of approaching God and salvation which are non-intellectual.[325]

As Walker notes, Ficino does mention the spiritual vehicle in his *Theologia Platonica* (XVIIII, 4),

[323] Ficino, *Comm. in. Tim*., c. xxviii, quoted in Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 9.
[324] *Ibid*., 9–10. The three lower senses (taste, smell, and touch) are regarded by Ficino as plainly inferior since they cannot transmit an intellectual content.
[325] *Ibid*., 38–39.

where he describes it in the terms delineated above, but he readily adds a denial of the astral descent of the soul and ends the chapter with a declaration of submission to Christian theologians.[326] Whatever Marsilio Ficino had at the back of his mind Cornelius Agrippa brought to the fore and developed much further. As I argue based on the textual references presented here, Agrippa's own conception of the *vehiculum animae* is more openly Neoplatonic, more clearly dualistic in terms of anthropology, and crucial for his explanation of certain magical phenomena. And, what is even more important, it brings him much closer to the risk of interpreting Christian doctrines through the lenses of Neoplatonic theurgy.

THE SECOND TRIAD: *MENS, RATIO, IDOLUM*

As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Cornelius Agrippa articulates his anthropology in two triads. The second, smaller triad pertains to soul and considers her main constituents. Here the German humanist sticks closely to Marsilio Ficino; Ficino's own threefold division, of course, goes back to Plato's tripartite theory of soul, according to which she is divided into reason, spirit, and appetite (*Republic*, IV), as well as to Aristotle's division of souls into the nutritive, the sensitive, and the rational (*On the Soul*, II, 412–13). However, a closer scrutiny of Ficino's and Agrippa's division of soul suggests that the first triad of *anima*, *corpus*, and *spiritus* should not be taken to designate three monolithic blocks without "grey zones" between them. In fact, a more nuanced examination shows that only the highest part of soul—the mind or *mens*—corresponds to what has so far been designated as "immortal soul." The other two constituents have different ontological destinies, with the lowest part—*idolum*—being mortal just like body and displaying a range of similarities both with body and spirit. My examination shows that in Agrippa's view, apart from the spirit as her vehicle, the soul herself

[326] *Ibid.*, 40.

needs to undergo internal changes in order to be able to participate in man's terrestrial existence. The relations between the three constituents of soul are crucial both for the dynamics of man's psychic and spiritual life and for the performance of magical operation.

How do earthly bodies accommodate celestial souls?

Although Perrone Compagni does not point to Marsilio Ficino in this particular instance, I believe that his *Theologia Platonica* (especially Books XV, 12 and XVIII, 4) must have been instrumental in Agrippa's own tripartite division of the soul in the *De occulta philosophia*. In XVIII, 4, a chapter titled "From where does the soul descend into the body?," Ficino discusses the old problem of embodiment, namely how an incorporeal soul, which was created by God as non-temporal,[327] can be joined to a temporal, gross body. The only solution, according to Ficino, is a set of intermediaries, one among them being *vehiculum animae* (a rare place in the *Theologia Platonica* where Ficino discusses this concept). Here one also finds the division of soul that most probably inspired Cornelius Agrippa.

Not referring to the Florentine humanist, but to Plotinus, the unnamed *Platonici*, and Hermes Trismegistos, Agrippa asserts that man's soul is divided into the supreme, middle, and lowest part.[328] The highest part is *mens*, the mind or intellect, which is a divine thing (*illud divinum*) coming from the intellectual world and as such inappropriate for a direct contact with body. The lowest is the animal or sensitive soul (*sensitiva anima*), which is also called *idolum* and is in charge of the sensory perception and other bodily functions such as reproduction, growth, and nutrition.[329] Significantly, the animal soul is produced out of matter and thus tightly connected to body. It can also be understood as bodily

[327] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, 1, 87 (XVIII, 2, 3): "Our souls were born after the birth of time …, yet they are not temporal entities" (*Animae nostrae post temporis ortum natae … neque tamen sunt temporales*).
[328] III 36, *DOP* 511, Tyson 581. Interestingly, Agrippa does not explicitly say "soul" but "man": all the mentioned ancient authorities "place three things in *man*" (*tria ponunt in homine*). Of course, it is clear that the division pertains to soul, but Agrippa's ambiguous phrasing might point to the above-mentioned blurred boundaries between the entities in question.
[329] *Idolum* is term used by Ficino (e.g *Theologia Platonica*, XVIII 4) and attributed by him in this sense to Plotinus (*Enn*. IV, 3). Freake renders it as "image" following Agrippa's explanation from III 41 that *idolum* is *animae imago*. In III 44, however, he translates the same term as "imagination."

consciousness. The middle part, connecting the two extremes, is the reason, *ratio*, to which Agrippa alternately refers as to "rational spirit" or "rational soul." The origin of *ratio* is the celestial world. If my reading of the above-quoted passage on two types of spirit (natural and rational) is correct, it would follow that the two lower parts of the tripartite soul are closely akin to spirit, which would rearrange my diagram of emanation in the following way (Figure 5):

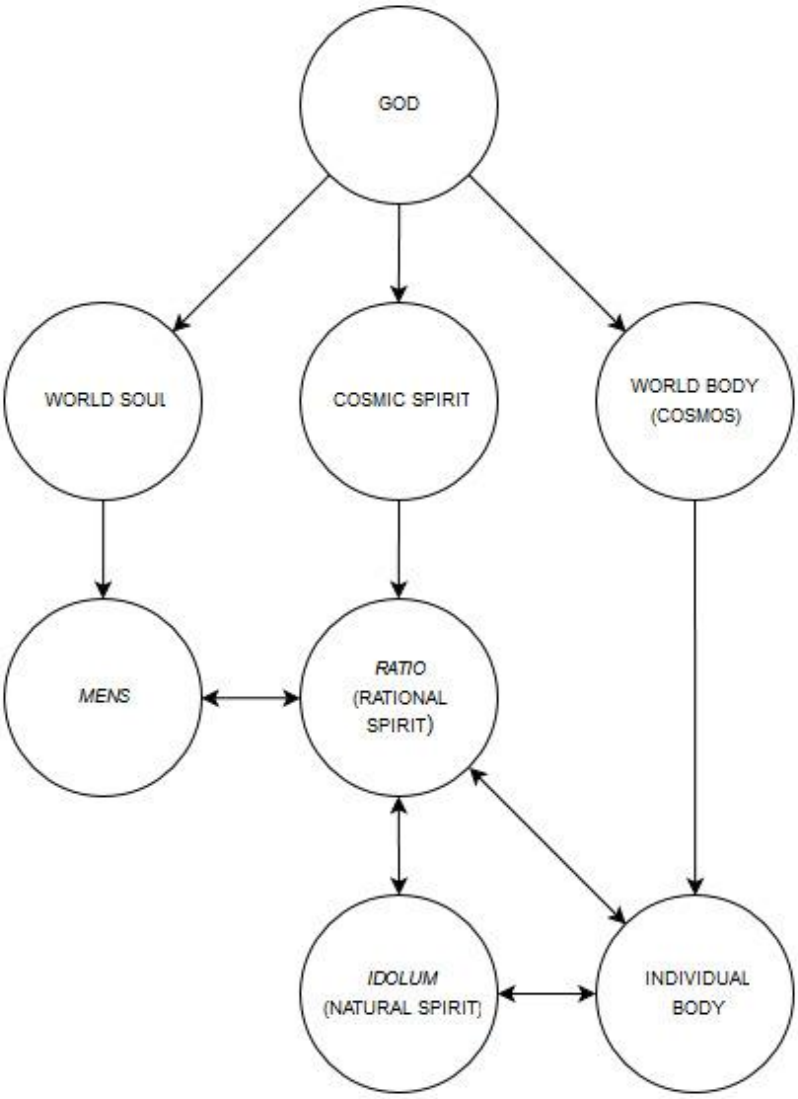

Figure 5: An alternative version of the emanational chains. The two-directional arrows link the elements that constitute the entirety of the human being.

This interpretation entails that the boundary between two emanational chains—that of *Anima Mundi* and of *Spiritus Mundi*—is blurred, with *ratio* being the midpoint of intersection. In other words, two of the three parts of soul belong more properly to the realm of *spiritus* or are closely akin to it.[330] Moreover, the diagram shows that neither *idolum* nor body are in direct touch with the mind, which is the only divine ingredient in man. They can only appeal to *ratio*, which thus "favors of the nature of both extremes" (*utriusque sapiens naturam extremorum*) and can turn to both sides as it chooses. In other words, *ratio* is the true battlefield for those who strive for ascension:

> For as the supreme portion never sins, never consents to evil and always resists error … and the inferior portion is always overwhelmed in evil, in sin and concupiscence, and draws to the worst things… but the spirit, which Plotinus calls the reasonable soul, being free in its nature, can according to its pleasure adhere to either of them: if it constantly adheres to the superior portion, it will ultimately be united and blessed with it, until it be assumed into God; but if it adheres to the inferior soul, it will be depraved and become vicious, until it be made a wicked demon.
>
> *Sicut enim portio illa suprema nunquam peccat, nunquam malo consentit semperque errori restitit … sic inferior illa portio in malo et peccato et concupiscentia semper demergitur et trahit ad pessima … spiritus vero, quae rationalis anima a Plotino dicitur, cum sit natura sua liber et utrique ad libitum adhaerere potest, si superiori portioni constanter adhaereat illi tandem unitur et beatificatur, donec adsumatur in Deum; si adhaereat animae inferiori, depravatur et demeretur, donec efficiatur malus daemon*.[331]

Agrippa here clearly delineates his view on the question of free will: it is confined to *ratio* only, with *mens* and *idolum* having their predestined and unchangeable roles in the drama of man's earthly existence. This point is of significant importance for Agrippa's understanding of salvation and ascension, which I discuss in Chapter Five.

Which soul is actually immortal?

At the beginning of *DOP* III 44, Agrippa gives another fascinating description of the descent of soul

[330] This interpretation poses some problems too. For instance, if *ratio* and *idolum* are spirit by nature, what is the purpose of the ethereal vehicle? Notwithstanding the difficulty of this question, Agrippa is very explicit (see the quotation above, n. 320) in calling rational soul *spiritus rationalis* and linking the two in a form of definition: *Nec miretur quispiam si animam rationalem dicimus esse illum spiritum.*

[331] III 36, *DOP* 511, Tyson 581. Certainly, one senses in these words Pico della Mirandola's notion of *hominis dignitas*.

into body, this time with regard to her main constituents and the emanation of divine light:

> Man's soul consists of a *mens*, *ratio*, and *idolum*.[332] The *mens* illuminates the *ratio*, and the *ratio* flows into the *idolum*: all are one soul. Unless illuminated by the *mens*, the *ratio* is not free from error, but the *mens* cannot give it light until enlightened by God, that is, the first light. For the first light in God is far beyond any understanding; hence it cannot be called an intelligible light. But when infused into the *mens*, it is made intellectual and can be understood. Then, when infused by the *mens* to the *ratio*, it is made rational, and is not only understandable but also cogitable. Then, when infused by the *mens* to the *idolum*[333] of the soul, it is made not only cogitable, but also imaginable. However, it is not yet corporeal. But when from there it comes into the celestial vehicle of the soul, it is made corporeal for the first time. Yet, it is not manifestly sensible until it has passed into the elemental body, either simple and aerial[334] or compound, in which the light is made manifestly visible to the eye.
>
> *Anima humana constat mente, ratione, et idolo: mens illuminat rationem, ratio fluit in idolum, omnia una est anima. Ratio, nisi per mentem illuminetur, ab errore non est immunis; mens autem lumen rationi non praebet nisi lucescente Deo, primo videlicet lumine. Prima enim lux in Deo est supereminens omnem intellectum, quapropter non potest lux intelligibilis vocari; sed lux illa quando infunditur menti fit intellectualis atque intelligi potest; deinde quando per mentem infunditur rationi fit rationalis ac potest non solum intelligi, sed etiam cogitari; deinde quando per rationem infunditur in idolum animae efficitur non solum cogitabilis, sed etiam imaginabilis, nedum tamen corporea; quando vero exinde migrat in aethereum animae vehiculum efficitur primum corporea, non tamen manifeste sensibilis, donec transierit in corpus elementale sive simplex aëreum sive compositum, in quo efficitur lux manifeste visibilis ad oculum*.[335]

I quote this long passage in full as it masterfully combines two significant themes of the *De occulta philosophia*: embodiment and emanation. Of crucial importance is also a clear relation that Agrippa establishes between various levels of embodiment and man's epistemological limitations. This criterion is valid universally: the divine light can be replaced with any other *virtus divina*, which can be tracked all the way down from its transcendent origin to its gross, sensible manifestation.

Furthermore, the passage underlines the subordination of different types of soul, which is here

[332] Freake translates these as "mind, reason, and imagination," but I preserve the original Latin terms in order to avoid terminological confusion.
[333] Here, however, Freake renders *idolum* as "phantasy," thus perpetuating his confusion.
[334] "Aerial" refers to one of the subtypes of ethereal body. Ficino, *Platonic Theology* 6, 111 (XVIII, 5, 7), refers to the opinion of "many Platonists" that there are actually three vehicles of the soul: the celestial, the aerial, and the composite (amounting to physical body). Also, note that, according to this passage, *idolum* is spirit by nature but different from the ethereal vehicle, which appears to be subordinate to *idolum*.
[335] III 43, *DOP* 538, Tyson 609.

presented in its epistemological perspective. This subordination, or psychic hierarchy (graphically represented in Figure 6), also determines the fate of each component upon the death of the physical body.

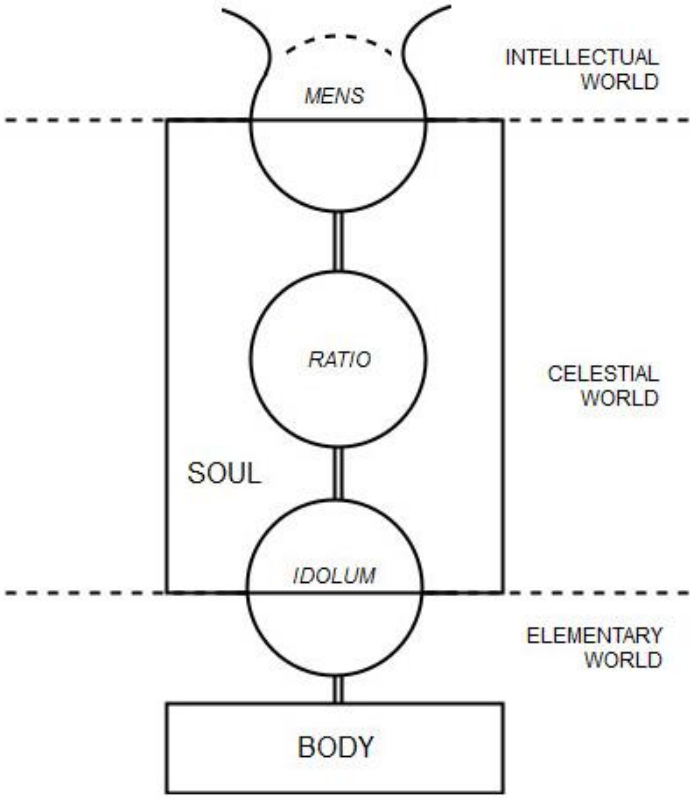

Figure 6: The tripartite structure of *anima humana*

Idolum, the sensitive or animal soul, being closest to the elementary world and made of its matter, perishes together with the body, although it is possible that it remains in existence a short time after the death of the body as its shadow.[336] This is, Agrippa explains, what the ancients meant when they described shadows in the underworld and he gives the example of Dido, the queen of Carthage, who in the *Aeneid* (IV, 650) described herself upon death as "the great image of me" (*magna mei*

[336] III 44, *DOP* 542, Tyson 613.

imago).[337] The temporary survival of *idolum* is often due to a person's impious life filled with sins and misdeeds. In such cases, *idolum* can even take up an aerial body (the grossest form of ethereal body) and become perceptible as a ghost or apparition. Although this might look just like another detail from Agrippa's stock of curiosities, it confirms his view that *idolum* is different from the ethereal vehicle of the soul, which stays with *ratio* upon leaving the physical body.

Ratio has a better future than *idolum* in that it is of celestial origin and therefore "long lived" (*a coelo suae originis beneficio longaeva es*t). It continues its existence in its ethereal vehicle but is ultimately doomed to disappear "unless it be restored in the circuit of its new body" (*nisi in novi corporis circuitu restauretur*).[338] During its post mortem existence, the rational soul dwells in "certain secret receptacles" (*secreta quaedam receptacula*) in which Agrippa recognizes the notions of the heathen underworld and the Christian heaven and hell.[339] However, after a long consideration of what exactly these *receptacula* are, he admits that "these things are of an incomprehensible obscurity" (*haec omnia… sint incomprenhensibilis obscuritatis*) and chooses not to say his final word on the subject.[340]

Significantly, *ratio* carries with itself consciousness and self-awareness: "when the soul is separated from the body, the perturbations of the memory and sense remain. […] And Virgil himself, together with the Pythagoreans and Platonists, confesses that separated souls retain the fresh memory of those things which they did in this life and their will" (*cum in anima seiuncta a corpore perturbationes memoriae sensusque remanent* […] *Et Vergilius ipse cum Pythagoricis et Platonicis fatetur animas separatas eorum quae in hac vita gesserunt nondum extinctam retinere memoriam atque*

[337] III 41, *DOP* 523, Tyson 594.
[338] III 44, *DOP* 542, Tyson 613. Perrone Compagni gives no reference for this enigmatic statement which, as Donald Tyson duly notes, evidently refers to transmigration of souls. It is enigmatic due to its explicitly non-Christian character and the unequivocal tone of the Latin indicative mode. Furthermore, the entire chapter was added to the 1533 edition and did not exist in the Würzburg manuscript.
[339] The idea of "certain secret receptacles" is derived verbatim from Augustine, *De civ. Dei* XII,9, whom Agrippa explicitly mentions a few lines above.
[340] III 41, *DOP* 534, Tyson 600. This reluctance clearly indicates that, just like Augustine before him, Agrippa had problems reconciling the Platonic eschatology of the separation of the soul from the body and its ascent upon death with the Christian eschatology of a bodily resurrection at the end of times.

voluntatem).[341] In other words, while *idolum* can be understood as the animating force behind the body and senses, *ratio* appears to be the seat of ego-consciousness and personhood as experienced during one's lifetime. Together with the fact that *ratio* retains the willpower (*voluntas*), it attributes to this part of soul a central role in Agrippa's understanding of man's salvation and ascension. Namely, besides a new embodiment, the only other opportunity for *ratio* to avoid disappearance is to be united with *mens*, which is the only immortal part of the soul (*uniatur menti immortali*). Actually, even *idolum* can survive if it is united with "a more sublime power" (*nisi ipsa quoque sublimiori potentiae uniatur*).[342] This possibility, which might even extend to the physical body, is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

For Agrippa, then, the answer to the question posed in the title of this section is clear: whenever he mentions "immortal soul," he actually means *mens* or the mind: "The mind, because it is from God, or from the intelligible world, is therefore immortal and eternal" (*Mens, quia a Deo est sive a mundo intelligibili, iccirco immortalis est et aeterna*).[343] The other two components of the soul have the opportunity to unite with the mind but are not themselves immortal. Thus the best thing for the rest of the soul is to achieve the unity with mind. Otherwise, both *ratio* and *idolum* eventually perish just like physical body.

Anima stans et non cadens: the source of all magical power

What strikes the attentive reader of the above-discussed passages is the fact that Agrippa says nothing of the whereabouts of *mens* upon the death of the body. Based on his discussion in *DOP* III 44, I conclude that, for him, it remains immoveable and fixed to the sphere of pure intellect, entirely separated from the lower levels of existence. In fact, the German occultist suggests a dialectical relation

[341] III 41, *DOP* 524, Tyson 595. It is clear from the context that by "separated souls" Agrippa has *ratio* in mind.
[342] III 44, *DOP* 542, Tyson 613.
[343] *Ibid*.

between *mens* and *ratio* that is reminiscent of Plotinus' troubles to explain how the soul simultaneously participates in the world and stays aloof.[344]

To begin with, *ratio* is and has to be connected to *mens*, otherwise no life would be possible: the vivifying power flows down from the sphere of transcendence through the various stages of emanation, both cosmic and personal. However, this connection appears to be "technical" in that it merely secures life; in other words, its direction is downward and, as such, necessary. This is the only way to understand Agrippa's statement that *the mind has to be obtained*: "Not all men obtain this mind because, as Hermes says, God wished to put it forward as a prize, so to speak, and reward for souls (*Verum non omnes homines mentem adepti sunt quoniam, ut inquit Hermes, voluit illam Deus pater tamquam certamen praemiumque animarum proponere*).[345] What happens when one "obtains" a mind Agrippa explains in the following way:

> Whoever therefore, being upheld by the divine grace, have obtained a mind, these according to the proportion of their works become immortal, as Hermes says, having comprehended by their understanding all things which are in the earth, and in the sea, and in the heavens, and if there be anything besides these above heaven, so that they behold even goodness itself.
>
> *Quicunque vero divina gratia fulti mentem consecuti sunt, hi secundum operum comparationem immortales evadunt, ut inquit Hermes, intelligentia sua cuncta complexi quae in terra sunt et quae in mari et quae in coelis et si quid praeter ea super coelum, ut ipsum quoque bonum intueantur*.[346]

"Obtaining the mind" thus means achieving spiritual ascension and coming in direct contact with *ipsum bonum*, i.e. the Divine. In other words, uniting the three components of soul leads directly to a union with God, since *mens* is already in the divine sphere. In both quotations Agrippa refers to the *Corpus Hermeticum* IV 3–5, where Hermes discloses this secret to Tat.[347] It means activating the upward

[344] *Enn*. IV, 8, 6.
[345] III 44, *DOP* 542, Tyson 613.
[346] III 44, *DOP* 543, Tyson 613.
[347] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 15: "God shared reason among all people, O Tat, but not mind, though he begrudged it to none. […] He wanted it put between souls, my child, as a prize for them to contest."

connection between *ratio* and *mens*—a connection that exists only in potentiality. The achievement of a full, two-directional connection between the two parts of soul amounts to a unity of *ratio* and *mens* whereby the former transcends its limitations and attains its divinity and immortality. If obtaining plain life through a downward movement from the mind is man's first birth, then obtaining the mind itself by man's upward movement can be considered a second birth, or rebirth.

The phrase Agrippa employs in this context is significant: a soul that has achieved such unity, says he, is called "the soul standing and not falling" (*anima stans et not cadens*).[348] He repeats the phrase three times in this fairly short chapter, which was appended as a whole to the 1533 edition, and ends with a remark that the unity of soul is the secret of all magic: "the form of all magical power is from the soul of man standing and not falling" (*forma igitur totius magicae virtutis est ab anima hominis stante et non cadente*).[349] This repeated phrasing, which is indeed conspicuous and not followed by any explanation, has led Michael H. Keefer to link Agrippa's notion of the unity of soul, or rebirth, to the heresiarch figure of Simon Magus, which makes Agrippa's adherence to Christianity look even more problematic. Keefer finds a lexical link in the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones* (II, 7), in which Simon is described as someone who wished himself to be called the *Standing One* (*cupidus Stantem nominari*).[350] Simon's demonic reputation in Christianity is unquestionable, which by analogy taints Agrippa's doctrine of ascension with demonic intentions. Yet, Keefer seems to be insufficiently aware of the context in which Agrippa uses this phrase: while he speaks of the upward movement of *ratio* toward *mens*, pseudo-Clement explains the meaning of the name *Stans* by referring to Simon's physical body.[351] I will resume this discussion in the Chapter Five of my thesis.

[348]III 44, *DOP* 542, Tyson 613.
[349] III 44, *DOP* 544, Tyson 614.
[350] Keefer, "Agrippa's Dilemma, " 646. For the whole argument see 643–50.
[351] *Ibid*., 646: "And he uses this name as implying that he can never be dissolved, asserting that his flesh is so compacted by the power of his divinity that it can endure to eternity."

Animus and *anima*: a conundrum of terms

It is necessary to make several additional observations on Agrippa's use of the terminology related to soul. Based on the above discussion, I argue that, in Agrippa's view, the common notion of human soul as the bearer of personhood and self-awareness mostly corresponds to *ratio*. As I have shown, *idolum* is on the verge of being corporeal, devoid of any intrinsic psychic faculties, whereas *mens* belongs more to the realm of transcendence than to the created world, as a potential "prize" for those who aspire to achieve it. This is confirmed by Agrippa's use of *anima* where one would expect *ratio*, for instance in III 44 (*quae igitur menti unita est anima*).

On the other hand, Agrippa sometimes mentions *animus* too. I tried to discern whether there are any differences in meaning between the masculine and feminine forms of the word—*animus* and *anima*—but nothing in the *De occulta philosophia* suggests that the author makes a semantic difference between the two.[352] In fact, a number of instances reveal that he uses *animus* and *anima* interchangeably and synonymously. This is the case, for example, with the prominent phrase "the passions of the soul," which sometimes appears as *passiones animi* and sometimes as *passiones animae*.[353]

This is an interesting question because Marsilio Ficino in his *Tres libri de vita* does make a difference, at least in the third book. As Kaske and Clark note in their "Principles of Translation,"[354] Ficino too does not distinguish between *animus* and *anima* in the first book of this work, but in Book Three he introduces a difference: there *animus* denotes "mind," and anima refers only to the human soul (in the above-delineated meaning of *ratio*). I suppose that this difference could have influenced

[352] See LS, 123, s.v. *animus* for the relative difference in Classical Latin: *anima* is derived from *animus* (akin to Greek ἄνεμος, "wind") to denote the living force of the physical body (Greek ψυχή), whereas *animus* stands for the rational soul in man, the mind, the intellect (Greek νοῦς). See also Onians, *The Origins of European Thought* (chapter "*Anima* and *Animus*"), 168–73, for a discussion on the complex relation between the two terms.
[353] E.g. I 62, *DOP* 220, Tyson 197. After all, in Perrone Compagni's *Index rerum*, *DOP* 645, *animus* and *anima* appear under the same entry, with nothing to indicate any differences.
[354] Kaske–Clark, "Introduction" to Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 14.

Agrippa's translator, James Freake, who in a number of instances translates *animus* as "mind," and *anima* as "soul."[355] However, elsewhere he erroneously translates *mens* as "spirit,"[356] which only testifies to the complexity of Agrippa's anthropology, both in terms of terminology and semantics. As evident from my discussion in this chapter, his anthropology is not devoid of ambiguities and internal inconsistencies.

In conclusion: Agrippa's Plotinian soul

Based on all the above said, it is safe to say that Agrippa's concept of the tripartite soul bears considerable similarities to Plotinus' notion of soul as discussed in *The Enneads* IV, 8.[357] Although Plotinus does not come up with a clearly delineated system containing three psychic hypostases and his convoluted style of discussion does not encourage simplified interpretations, it is beyond doubt that the ancient philosopher and his Renaissance successor were troubled by the same problem: how can an immaterial soul, which is the seat of the self, be present in the material body? The only solution, according to both, is that the immaterial soul partly transforms itself through a sequence of descending stages, while partly remaining what it is—a transcendent entity somehow partaking of the spiritual realm.

Plotinus' unique testimony of his own experience epitomizes the problem:

> Many times it has happened: lifted out of the body *into myself*; becoming external to other things and self-encentered; beholding a marvelous beauty; then, more than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; *enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine*; (…) yet, there comes the moment of *descent from intellection to reasoning*, and after that sojourn in the divine, I ask myself how it happens that I can now be descending, and how did the Soul ever enter my body, the Soul which, even within the body, is the high thing it has shown itself to be.[358]

[355] See a whole section in Book One dealing with the passions of the soul, which he renders as "the passions of the mind" (I 62–68). Needless to say, *mens* in Agrippa's above-discussed tripartite scheme cannot have any passions.
[356] III 41, *DOP* 523, Tyson 594.
[357] Plotinus, *The Enneads*, tr. Stephen MacKenna, with notes by John Dillon (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 334–43.
[358] *Enn*. IV, 8, 1 in *ibid*., 334. Italics mine.

It is evident from Plotinus' words that for him the only true life ("the noblest life") and true identity belong to the soul that is immersed in intellection, which corresponds to Agrippa's understanding of *mens* and its role. However, there comes a moment of descent from intellection to reasoning, which, again, closely corresponds to the relation that Agrippa establishes between *mens* and *ratio*: it appears that *mens* partially and temporarily delegates its life and identity to *ratio*, while itself remaining aloof and barely perceived by the lower psychic hypostasis. This simultaneous emanation of the immortal soul and its remaining identical to itself is explained by Plotinus in the following way:

> So it is with the individual souls; the appetite for the divine Intellect urges them to return to their source, but they are, too, a power apt to administration in this lower sphere; (…) In the Intellectual, then, they remain with the All-Soul, and are immune from care and trouble; in the heavenly sphere, inseparable from the All-Soul, they are administrators with it just as kings, associated with the supreme ruler and governing with him, do not descend from their kingly stations: the souls indeed are thus far in the one place; *but there comes a stage at which they descend from the universal to become partial* and self-centered; in a weary desire from standing apart they find their way, each to a place of its very own. This state long maintained, the Soul is a deserter from the totality; its differentiation has severed it; its vision is no longer set in the Intellectual; it is a partial thing, isolated, weakened, full of care, intent upon the fragment; (…) With this comes what is known as the casting of the wings[359], the enchaining in body. (…) It has fallen: it is at the chain: *debarred from expressing itself now through its intellectual phase, it operates through sense*; it is a captive; this is the burial, the encavernment, of the Soul.[360]

Despite the fall, emphasizes Plotinus, the soul preserves "for ever, something transcendent." It only needs to turn toward the Intellectual and it will be freed from the shackles of the body. This turn activates its memory of the spiritual realm, which is "the starting point of a new vision of essential being."[361] Plotinus thus comes to a far-reaching conclusion, which, in my opinion, fits Agrippa's tripartite understanding of the soul: "Souls that take this way have place in both spheres, living of necessity the life there and the life here by turns, the upper life reigning in those able to consort more

[359] A reference to *Phaedr*. 246C.
[360] *Enn*. IV, 8, 4 in *ibid*., 338–39. Italics mine.
[361] *Ibid*., 339. This is a reference to Plato's notion of ἀνάμνησις (see, for instance, *Phaedr*. 249e 5), which Agrippa persistently employs when he calls for *ratio* to turn towards *mens*, and not towards *idolum*.

continuously with the divine Intellect, the lower dominant where character or circumstances are less favorable."[362] As discussed above, this is precisely Agrippa's position: *ratio* as the seat of one's this-wordly identity can either turn toward *mens* and reawaken its forgotten divine identity or immerse itself in *idolum* and sink even deeper in its fragmented state of existence. In this sense it is significant that Plotinus speaks of *mens* as "the upper phase" of soul (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἄνω, literally: "that part of soul which is above").

Plotinus' final verdict on the question—and this is the core of Agrippa's anthropology as discussed throughout this chapter—is given in the following words:

> And—if it is desirable to venture the more definite statement of a personal conviction with the general view—*even our human Soul has not sunk entire*; *something of it is continuously in the Intellectual Realm*, though if that part which is in this sphere of sense, hold the mastery, or rather be mastered here and troubled, it keeps us blind to what the upper phase holds in contemplation.[363]

Within this overarching frame, Agrippa adopted Marsilio Ficino's tripartite psychology and wedded it to his own notion of *triplex mundus* taken over from Pico's *Heptaplus* and Reuchlin's *De arte cabbalistica*.[364] In this way he came up with an elegant and convincing tripartite model of the human soul that offered an explanation for the paradoxical union between an immaterial entity and its material receptacle.

To sum up, Agrippa inherited Plotinus' diagnosis of the problem. Where he clearly parted from the ancient philosopher was his understanding of the remedy. Whereas Plotinus did not endorse

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[362] *Ibid*. In my opinion, MacKenna's rendering of παρὰ μέρος as "by turns" in this passage does not imply a differentiation between souls with regard to their upward or downward orientation. It rather implies oscillations within every single soul, i.e. their moving upwards and downwards intermittently. Plotinus has in mind a twofold position of each embodied soul: they *simultaneously* live a double life, with the spiritual or material aspects more dominant *in proportion* to the souls' proximity to or distance from the sphere of the Intellect. "In proportion to" is another way to understand the phrase παρὰ μέρος: see LSJ, 1104, s.v. μέρος.

[363] *Enn*. IV, 8, 8 in Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 342. Italics mine. This statement goes against Gregory Shaw's insistence on "a Plotinian Platonism where the soul never descended into a body;" see Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul. The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1995), 10–12. What he terms "the doctrine of an undescended soul" does not take into account the twofold position of soul discussed by Plotinus in the above-cited passages.

[364] See Chapter Two, 82 n. 192.

theurgic rituals as the means for achieving ascension, the German occultist saw them as God-given instruments in reaching his main goal proclaimed at the beginning of the *De occulta philosophia*: *conscendere ad ipsum archetypum mundum*. The following chapter discusses this other aspect of Agrippa's anthropology.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIXA INTENTIO: THE MECHANISMS OF MAGICAL OPERATION

In the previous chapter I showed that Agrippa's anthropology entails a sequence of closely interrelated entities with an increasing degree of materiality, ranging from the immortal *mens* to the mortal body. I argued that, in Agrippa's interpretation, "soul" does not have a single meaning, which is reflected in the terminology he employs. In the broadest sense, soul consists of three parts: *mens*, *ratio*, and *idolum*. Yet, in a more narrow, Platonic sense, only *mens* can be considered a "true soul" since soul is by definition immortal, while both *ratio* and *idolum* are perishable. Moreover, I showed that the latter two are more akin to cosmic spirit and that they can be turned into a true soul only if united with *mens*.

However, in contrast to its ontological centrality, *mens* remains, so to speak, a relatively passive element in man's psychological life and the magician's project of spiritual ascent: it is the ultimate goal in the process, something yet to be obtained, a "prize" to be won (to use Hermes's phrase), but it remains high above the sublunary and celestial spheres, aloof from all the everyday activities of *ratio* and *idolum*. It is precisely through the activities of the two lower souls that human beings live like rational creatures and magicians operate. *Ratio* is, as I argued, the seat of man's self-awareness and personhood (the "I" feeling), while *idolum* is the nodal point of both internal and external senses. Thus one comes to a third possible definition of soul: it is the "operative soul" of man, which consists of *ratio* and *idolum* and is constantly faced with a choice to move upward towards the immortality of *mens* or downward towards the mortality of elemental body.

"Operative soul" and "true soul" are my own concepts and terms that Agrippa himself does not use. However, based on my analysis in Chapter Three, I believe that there are enough reasons to

introduce them in the above-delineated sense. In doing so I was partly inspired by Jan Bremmer's discussion of the ancient views on the dichotomy of soul and her division into "body soul" and "free soul," whereby the former provides life, self-awareness, and ego-consciousness, whereas the latter has no contact with the ego-soul, never carries psychological features and is inactive while the body is awake (and vice versa).[365] The "free soul" represents one's original identity and reveals her existence in dreams, trance, and after death (and thus amounts to "dream soul" in shamanism and other traditions). Although there are differences between this concept and Agrippa's "true soul" and "operative soul," and I do not make a direct comparison between Bremmer's and my division, there are, in my opinion, conceptual similarities that can help one better understand Agrippa's views on human soul.

To the extent *mens* is "obtained" it becomes an active participant in the operative soul. Meanwhile, it remains a more or less isolated part of the soul and personhood, locked up in its sphere of intellect and immortality, man's dormant link to the realm of God. As discussed throughout this thesis, Agrippa sees magic as the best means for activating that link. Thus it needs to be examined what kind of magic is appropriate for such an exalted goal, and what kind of magic serves other, less lofty purposes. In the present chapter I analyze different kinds of magical influence described in the *De occulta philosophia* in the above-discussed anthropological framework.

The plethora of magical practices examined by Agrippa have one principle in common: manipulating various *virtutes* by directing one's operative soul in certain ways. Whatever these *virtutes* are—and they can vary depending on the type of magical operation—the process of manipulation is based on one crucial element: that of a focused attention (*fixa intentio*). Thus, in my view, all types of magic described in the *De occulta philosophia*, regardless of their purpose and objectives, have the same anthropological and psychological foundations stemming from the above-discussed tripartite

[365] Jan Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 13–69.

scheme. They all follow the same basic pattern of mental direction and focusing, which is the main point of my interest in this chapter.

PASSIONES ANIMI: OPERATING BY AFFECTS AND EMOTIONS

When discussing Agrippa's understanding of magic, authors usually emphasize its cosmological aspects: the hierarchy of worlds, the laws of correspondences, and other ideas examined in Chapter Two. It is regularly pointed out that the use of sympathetic magic is made possible by the hierarchically structured, living universe. However, of equal importance is the psychological basis of magical operation. Namely, for magic to be feasible at all, the fact that the cosmos is structured in a certain way is not enough; within that structure *man* should also fulfill certain requirements if he is to rely upon and utilize such a favorable cosmic structure. To express it with a trivial metaphor, in order to be able to use an existing network of roads, one must first have some fuel in the car. What kind of "fuel" or driving force is required for the magician to operate, Agrippa explains in some detail in the first book of the *De occulta philosophia*, in an important series of chapters (I 62–68) discussing what he terms *passiones animi*.

The magician's driving forces

Taken in a broader sense, this sequence of chapters provides an insight into Agrippa's views on man in general, not only on those who nurture the ambition of becoming magicians. In a more narrow sense, it is of importance for my examination since it explains the psychological nature of the interaction between magicians and the objects of their influence. In his discussion Agrippa also treats one of the most important human capacities—fantasy or *vis imaginativa*. Finally, the Nettesheimer's scrutiny of the *passiones animi* clearly points to the magician's main tool: the mental state of *fixa intentio* (focused attention).

In his discussion of the *passiones animi* Agrippa relies on Marsilio Ficino's physiological

definition of *spiritus*—a thin substance created from blood. Within the larger framework of Book One of the *Occult Philosophy*, he does so in order to justify magic as an entirely natural discipline closely akin to medicine. However, this cautious initial approach gradually develops into a full-fledged doctrine of sympathetic magic that reaches far beyond the boundaries of psychophysiology. Thus in Book Three the reader learns that Agrippa considers even piety and faith as types of "affects" which enable the magician to "operate through religion" (*operari per religionem*). Based on this, I will argue that the particular types of magic, which are commonly divided into natural, image, and intellectual magic, are to a large extent determined by the types of passions or affective states involved.

External and internal senses

The main channels of communication between man's soul and the external world are bodily senses. As such, they are also mediators of passions: they receive and channel external stimuli, which then meet with appropriate responses within man's soul, spirit, and body. In a chapter titled "On the forming of man" (*De formatione hominis*, *DOP*, I 61) Agrippa accepts a common division of senses into external and internal.[366] He arranges the five external senses hierarchically, according to the following criteria: 1) their location on the body, 2) their affinity with the nature of elements, and 3) their spatial reach. Eyesight is thus the best external sense since the eyes are placed in the uppermost part of the body, have affinity with the element of fire, and the objects of their perception are farthest off.[367] In the same vein, hearing is associated with air, smell with a mixture of air and water, taste with water, and touch with earth.[368] Based on this taxonomy and on the ray-theory which he combines with Ficino's doctrine of *spiritus* (which I discuss below), Agrippa regards eyesight as *a form of spirit* and thereby departs

[366] As Perrone Compagni notes, *DOP* 216, Agrippa's immediate source is Ficino's work *De voluptate*, 8, 4, but these are mainly traditional notions dating back to the classical authorities, most notably Aristotle and Galen.
[367] I 61, *DOP* 216–17, Tyson 193. Agrippa regards fire as the best of the four elements since it corresponds to *mens*, just as air corresponds to *ratio*, water to *imaginatio*, and earth to *corpus*; see I 7, *DOP* 100, Tyson 24. Fire is also an emanation of the divine light, which plays an important role in Agrippa's theory of ascension.
[368] As for olfaction, Agrippa says it has "a middle nature between air and water" (*medium inter aërem aquamque*). Ficino calls this middle nature simply *vapor*: see Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 7 n. 2.

from Ficino, who confines this quality only to sound, i.e. the sense of hearing.[369]

Agrippa divides the internal senses into the following four: the common sense, imagination, fantasy, and memory.[370] The function of the common sense is to collect the impressions of the external senses and convey them to imagination, which the German humanist understands as a container of all sensory impressions. In other words, its only function is to "retain" and "present" them to fantasy (*imagines… acceptas retinere easque… phantasiae … offerre*), which then processes the sensory data by examining and discerning them (*iudicare atque … discreverit*).[371] Finally, fantasy commits the processed images to memory, which stores them as elements of one's personal experience and self-awareness, thus enabling them to participate in a variety of cognitive activities.

It strikes the eye that Agrippa's understanding of the function of *imaginatio* is rather narrow: according to him, it merely serves as a channel between the *sensus communis* and *phantasia*. However, upon a more careful examination, his division between imagination and fantasy appears artificial, especially as elsewhere he uses these terms synonymously.[372] Such a conclusion is supported by the fact that the ultimate source of Agrippa's and Ficino's notion of *imaginatio/phantasia* must have been Aristotle, who in his work *De anima* does not make any such differentiation.[373] On the contrary, his term φαντασία is regularly translated as *imaginatio* and he defines it by referring to the notion of

[369] See Chapter Three, 132–33.
[370] Ancient and medieval theories of sensation, together with the notion of *sensus interiores*, have a long and complex history, starting with Aristotle and embracing key-figures such as Galen, Nemesius of Edesa, and Avicenna. For a comprehensive discussion and the most relevant references see Muhammad U. Faruque, "The Internal Senses in Nemesius, Plotinus, Galen: The Beginning of an Idea," *Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 10, No. 2 (2016): 119–39.
[371] I 61, *DOP* 217, Tyson 193–94.
[372] For instance, in I 63, *DOP* 221, Tyson 199. Agrippa attributes his division of the interior senses to Averroes, and Perrone Compagni identifies this source as Averrois *Opera* (Venetiis 1562), *Suppl*. I, 2:7, 17 A–K, but I did not have the opportunity to see that text.
[373] He discusses imagination in the *De anima* III, 3, 428a–429a, where he carefully distinguishes it from both perception and mind, but does not mention anything similar to Agrippa's division between imagination and fantasy.

image: fantasy is that in virtue of which an image occurs in us.[374] Finally, Plotinus, who was an even more important source for Renaissance syncretists than Aristotle, understood φαντασία in a similar way, as the faculty of image-making or imagination.[375] Thus, in my opinion, *imaginatio* and *phantasia* can be understood as one: a place where external stimuli are interiorized by being turned into mental images. The only difference that Agrippa makes between these two faculties is that he attributes cognitive powers to fantasy and not to imagination (yet he does not explicitly *deny* them to the latter), but this still does not explain the difference in kind that he makes.[376]

Given all the above said, the following conclusion seems plausible to me. The fact that Agrippa (via Ficino) names the sensitive soul *idolum* by Latinizing the Plotinian εἴδωλον (which means "image" and is commonly rendered in Latin as *imago*)[377] suggests that imagination/fantasy is closely akin to or even identical with *idolum*. In other words, it is the point of intersection between the psychic and physical components of the human being: the lowest part of the soul is simultaneously the finest part of the body. This is confirmed by the fact that Agrippa defines *idolum* as the only component of the soul which is of material (elemental) origin.[378] Furthermore, he accepts the common Galenic encephalocentrist notion that the head is the seat of the internal senses (Figure 7): the common sense and imagination occupy "the front cells of the brain" (*priores cerebri cellulas*), fantasy is in "the highest and middle part of the head" (*supremum et medium capitis*), and memory in the hindmost part

[374] Arist. *De anima*, III, 3, 428a. "Imagination" is a common rendering for φαντασία in English translations: see Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. J. A. Smith, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 587–89.
[375] *Enn*. IV, 3. On Plotinus' understanding of φαντασία see G. M. Hutchinson, "Apprehension of Thought in *Ennead* 4.3.30," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 5 (2011): 262–82; Edward Warren, "Imagination in Plotinus," *The Classical Quarterly* 16, No. 2 (1966): 277–85; Faruque, "The Internal Senses in Nemesius, Plotinus, Galen," 125–30.
[376] Based on Agrippa's attribution of cognitive powers to *phantasia*, one might speculate that it goes beyond the level of *idolum* and even reaches *ratio*, which is the seat of all cognitive faculties. However, *ratio* is of celestial origin, and fantasy, as shown in the text below, is of somatic nature: it occupies a part of the brain, whereas *ratio* is infused into the heart and then spread through the rest of the body by the medium of spirit.
[377] *Enn*. IV, 3, *passim*.
[378] See Chapter Three, 135–40.

of it (*postremum*).[379] This means that there is a direct link—if not even identity—between the brain and *idolum*.

On closer scrutiny, some of Agrippa's views presented here reveal inconsistencies. For instance, in *DOP* III 41 he clearly states that *ratio* in the post mortem state retains the memory of life: "separated souls retain the fresh memory of those things which they did in this life and their will."[380] Even *idolum* appears to retain some kind—or some degree—of memory, as suggested by Agrippa's example of Dido's shadow, who angrily recognizes Aeneas in the underworld. However, one reads in *DOP* I 61 that memory (along with the other interior senses) is located in the brain. Furthermore, in *DOP* III 43 Agrippa explicitly attributes cogitation and discernment to *ratio* (which is of celestial nature), whereas in I 61 he views them as functions of fantasy, which is located in the brain.[381]

[379] I 61, *DOP* 218, Tyson 194. On Galen and his encephalocentrist theory see Jules Rocca, *Galen on the Brain: Anatomical Knowledge and Physiological Speculation in the Second Century AD* (Boston: Brill, 2003). Agrippa's locating of *imaginatio* and *phantasia* in different parts of the brain probably follows Averroes' division since Galen does not make such a distinction. Galen's list of δυνάμεις (psychic faculties), which include both cognitive faculties and internal senses, consists of φαντασία, ἀνάμνησις, μνήμη, ἐπιστήμη, νόησις, and διανόησις; see Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, trans. P. de Lacy, Vol. I (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980), 438,27–440,8.

[380] *DOP* 524, Tyson 595: *animas separatas eorum quae in hac vita gesserunt nondum extinctam retinere memoriam*.

[381] According to the Galenic encephalocentrist theory, the activities of the internal senses do not take place in the brain tissue itself but in the ventricles (κοιλίαι), which are filled with bodily spirits (πνεῦμα) and are "less material" due to their hollowness. Galen inherited the Stoic notion of πνεῦμα but moved the center of pneumatic activity from the heart to the brain; see Rocca, *Galen on the Brain*, 171–237.

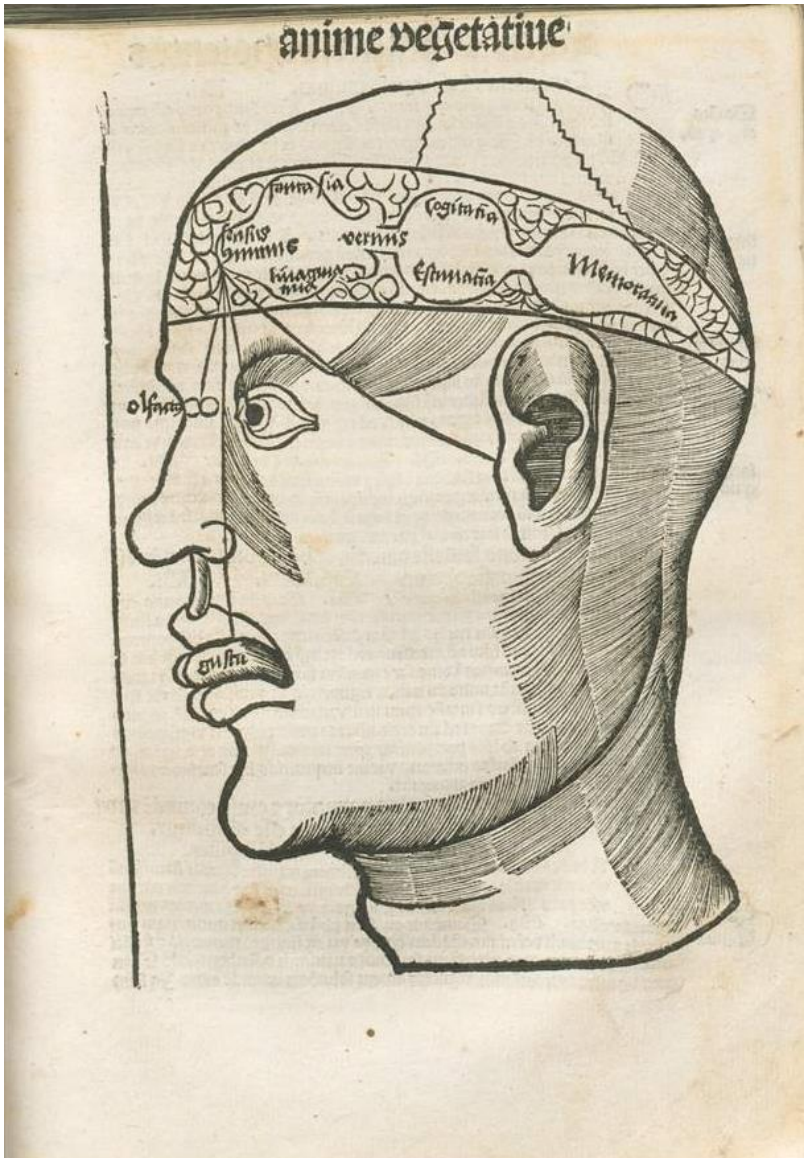

Figure 7: The three brain cells as the seats of internal senses. Gregor Reisch, *Margarita philosophica nova* (Strasbourg, 1508) [VD16 R 1037], p. F7 r. Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/bsb00007953/image_505

How can the same cognitive faculties be parts of the soul and the body at the same time? The same problem troubled Plotinus and he attempted to solve it by asserting that the faculties of the soul are not *in* the body as its constituent parts, but that their "activity" takes place there.[382] In this way he sought to

[382] *Enn*. IV, 3, 23. See also Faruque, "The Internal Senses in Nemesius, Plotinus, Galen," 125–30.

reconcile the immaterial nature of the soul with its central role in the functioning of the internal bodily senses.

A possible answer from Agrippa's perspective, as I suggested above, is that the internal senses are of a mixed nature, partly physical and partly psychic, and that they are thus the nodal point between the two ontological poles of the human being. In other words, the Plotinian "activity" of the soul equals Agrippa's lower parts of it. This is strongly reminiscent of Ficino's description of *spiritus*, which is "almost not a body but not yet a soul, and almost not a soul but not yet a body."[383] Ultimately, it supports my thesis that, for Agrippa, both *ratio* and *idolum* are closely akin to spirit, amounting to what I term the operative soul. Such an understanding would enable him to find a middle way between the immateriality of the Plotinian soul and the physicality of Galen's interpretation of psychic processes—the only way for the magical *operatio* to be feasible at all: to be able to operate, the magician's soul should not be inseparable from his body, but at the same time he should be sufficiently attached to the elemental world.

As ever, Agrippa remains ambiguous in attempts to systematize his anthropology, but one thing is certain: the first stage in the emergence of passions is the perception and mental processing of sensory data, a process that he sees as the creation of *imagines*. As I will show, some senses, such as eyesight and imagination, can function in the opposite direction too: they can reflect passions back to the external world and thus influence it.

The types of passions

What exactly are *passiones animi* according to Agrippa? In general, he uses this term to denote the entirety of emotional and affective states experienced by a human being. They can be understood as points of interaction between the *homo miscrocosmos* and the surrounding macrocosm. More precisely,

[383] *Tres libri de vita*, III 3, in: Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 256.

Agrippa defines them as certain "motions" within the soul (*quidam motus*) or "inclinations" proceeding from man's overall perception of the world (*inclinationes proventientes ex apprehensione alicuius rei*).[384] Even based on these few initial remarks it is evident that the English word "passion" is not entirely compatible with the Latin *passio*, which has a much broader scope of meanings. It derives from the verb *patior*, whose general meaning is "to experience," whereas the most common present-day meaning of the word "passion" can even be misleading in this context. *Passio* implies both a stimulus that is turned into an image and a reaction to it. For the sake of convenience, however, I mostly use the term employed by Agrippa's English translator.[385]

Agrippa's typology of passions follows the basic division of soul into *mens*, *ratio*, and *idolum*.[386] Hence there are three general modes of apprehension: sensual, rational, and intellectual. Corresponding to these are the three types of passions:

> 1) *passiones naturales sive animales* (natural or animal passions): the lowest type of affective and emotional states that emerge as responses to the basic perception of commodities and incommodities (e.g. the fear of fire, the enjoyment derived from eating palatable food, etc.);
>
> 2) *passiones rationales seu voluntariae* (rational or voluntary passions): the affective and emotional states arising from one's apprehension of more subtle or abstract notions such as virtues and vices, praise and condemnation, etc. (e.g. the feeling of shame);
>
> 3) *passiones intellectuales* (intellectual passions): the highest level of affective and emotional states arising from one's apprehension of abstractions such as truth and

[384] I 62, *DOP* 220, Tyson 197.
[385] An alternative and probably more adequate translation would be "affect," but it is not unambiguous either. *Passio* in the sense Agrippa uses it derives from Plotinus' term πάθος; see *Enn.* IV, 6, 3.
[386] Perrone Compagni, *DOP* 220, notes that in his explication of the types of passions Agrippa also relies on Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.* IIa, quest. 22–25.

delusion, justice and injustice, etc. (e. g. a hope in salvation).[387]

In my opinion, these "types" can also be understood as different *levels of manifestation* of the same basic passions: for instance, depending on the source and type of perception, fear can appear as *naturalis*, *rationalis* or *intellectualis*. The fear of a beast is arguably not the same affect as the fear of being rejected by the society or the fear of eternal torments in hell, even though all these cases are linguistically marked by the same word. Similarly, "love" can denote states that range from the carnal passions of *idolum* to the ecstatic unity with God experienced by *mens*. That Agrippa understands passions in this way is indicated by the fact that he enumerates only eleven of them: love, hatred, desire, horror, joy, grief, hope, despair, boldness, fear, and anger.[388] One can thus assume that all other affective and emotional states that can take place in man's inner life are combinations of the basic eleven.

However, there is an important limitation in Agrippa's treatment of the topic in Book One. He restricts his discussion to the first type, natural or animal passions, which are ruled by fantasy (*phantasia*) or imaginative power (*virtus imaginativa*).[389] The other two types of passions are linked to the higher parts of soul, as Agrippa explains at the end of chapter 65:

> Now, if the above-mentioned passions have such a great power in fantasy, they certainly have a greater power in reason, inasmuch reason is more excellent than fantasy; and lastly, they have much greater power in the mind. For the *mind*, when it is fixed *upon higher entities* for some good purpose with whole intention of the *soul*, often affects another's body as well as its own with some divine gift. (…) But of those more fully in the following chapters, where we shall discourse of religion.
>
> *Nunc vero, si passiones supradictae tantam vim habent in phantasia, certe maiorem habent in ratione, quatenus iam ratio ipsa phantasia est excellentior; multo denique maiorem in mente. Haec enim, quando ad beneficium aliquod tota animi intentione erga superos defigitur, saepe corpus tam proprium quam alienum divino aliquo munere*

[387] I 62, *DOP* 220, Tyson 197. This highest kind of hope equals faith. But, as I discuss later, it is not the only way in which Agrippa understands faith. He also views it as an emanated divine virtue that enlightens those who capture it.
[388] *Ibid.* I 62. This list also comes from Aquinas.
[389] In other words, by *idolum*: I 63, *DOP* 221, Tyson 199.

efficit. (...) De his latius patebit inferius, ubi de religione disseremus.[390]

These words confirm both my interpretation that imagination/fantasy is identical with *idolum* and my suggestion that passions can move vertically through different parts of the soul and hence manifest themselves in different ways. In other words, in their lowest form of appearance passions are linked to *idolum*; on a more subtle level they appear in *ratio*, and finally in *mens*. Why, then, Agrippa discusses only the first group, while he entirely omits the examination of the other two? The reason is obvious: the whole discussion falls within the first book of the *De occulta philosophia*, which is mostly dedicated to natural magic, and the author needs to remain faithful to his design. The passions linked to *ratio* and *mens* belong to the higher realms of life (Agrippa here explicitly mentions religion). Since his main goal in Book One is to argue for the *natural* basis of magic as an activity deeply rooted in man's biology and psychophysiology, it is a part of Agrippa's rhetorical strategy to leave aside any details that might point to a broader perspective.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, a similar tactic was employed by Marsilio Ficino in his *De vita libri tres*, in which he started off with a deliberately limited concept of *spiritus*, taken in its biological sense as a corporeal vapor, only to broaden his discussion of it far beyond its biological aspects.[391] Such an approach was undoubtedly apologetic, for its purpose was to make potentially suspicious notions not sound dangerously unnatural. However, apart from the cautious "urge for naturalization" that should protect the author from suspicions of heresy, there is another important reason for such a gradual and scattered disclosure of ideas: the subtle change of authorial tones and emphases, both in

[390] I 65, *DOP* 227, Tyson 205. I italicized two interesting details in Freake's translation. First, he equates the terms *mens* and *animus* by entirely leaving out the latter: he translates the phrase *tota animi intentione* by omitting the genitive *animi* and linking the phrase to the subject *mens* ("with *its* whole intention"; properly: "with the whole intention of the soul"). This clearly testifies to the translator's confusion about the basic anthropological terminology. Secondly, Freake translates the words *erga superos* as "upon God" (properly: "upon higher entities"). This can be interpreted as a tacit Christianization of Agrippa's text since the pluralized substantive *superi* is certainly not used to denote the Christian God.

[391] Thus in Book One of his *Tres libri de vita* (I, 2) Ficino defines *spiritus* as "a certain vapor of the blood" (*vapor quidam sanguinis*), whereas in Book Three he introduces the notion of a cosmic spirit pervading the universe (III, 3 and *passim*). See also Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 3–4 and 12–13.

Ficino and (even more) in Agrippa, served to prepare their target audiences for bolder steps in unfolding their argumentation (in Agrippa's case, in accordance with the already discussed principle of *dispersa intentio*).

The influence of passions upon one's own body and soul

Agrippa's first step in his discussion of the topic is to establish a direct causal link between the *passiones animi* and the psychosomatic processes that take place in man. As mentioned above, the first mediator of this interaction is fantasy or the imaginative power of the soul. Fantasy is incited either directly by sensual perception or indirectly by cogitation (which includes the reactivation of *imagines* stored in memory). Once activated, it further affects various changes in the body and soul by stirring up the *passiones animi* and thus influencing man's *spiritus*. Depending on the nature of the stimuli it receives, the fantasy literally *moves* the spirit around the body and even out of it, upward or downward, inward or outward (*movendo spiritum sursum vel deorsum, ad extra vel ad intra*).[392] The spirit then conveys that particular movement to various bodily fluids and organs, and the result is a perceptible physical or psychic change. If, for instance, I perceive something that causes anger or vengefulness, my fantasy will act correspondingly and set my bodily spirit into motion in such a way as to produce heat, redness in my face, and a bitter taste in my mouth.[393] In fear my fantasy induces coldness, trembling, speechlessness, and paleness.[394] Agrippa goes on to enumerate and describe various emotional and affective states that activate the same causal chain: joy, sadness, anxiety, love, etc. It is crucial to note that in all these examples he operates with the *physiological concept of spirit* inherited from Ficino: it is a subtle bodily vapor—or, more precisely, a group of vapors—created from blood and capable of being "moulded" in different ways. By being moulded (that is, by being moved around, shaped,

[392] I 63, *DOP* 221, Tyson 199.
[393] *Ibid*.: *ira vel cupiditas vindictae producit calorem, rubidinem, amarum saporem.*
[394] *Ibid*.: *timor inducit frigus, cordis trepidationem, vocis defectum atque pallorem.*

impressed) it can *convey information*—to use a modern analogy—from the passions to the physical body.[395] In other words, the bodily spirit is capable of receiving impressions from various passions (*species passionum impressae sunt spiritibus*)[396] and of conveying these impressions to the physical body. This gives Agrippa the grounds to claim that the process is entirely natural, with the bodily spirit serving as an interface between the soul and the body.

The mediating power of fantasy and spirit as its main tool becomes even more evident in those cases which Agrippa defines as "imitative" (*per modum imitationis a similitudine*).[397] In such cases one's perception of the external world triggers the process by activating the mimetic nature of fantasy: when I see someone yawn, I will start yawning myself; if I hear someone mention something sour, I will immediately feel that taste on my tongue and make the corresponding facial expression; if I see someone's blood, I might faint, etc.[398] All these bodily reactions, no matter how accidental and insignificant they might seem, serve in Agrippa's eyes as indicators of the imaginative power of the soul—a sine qua non for any magical operation.

This is also how the German humanist explains the efficacy of medicine, at least in some of its aspects: the mere knowledge of the result one can expect after taking a prescribed medicine or submitting oneself to the physician can yield that same result. Even more helpful than knowledge is faith, "when the patient places much faith in the physician, thus disposing himself for receiving the virtue of the physician and the medicine."[399] Agrippa reports a story told by William of Paris[400] of a patient who could pass stool merely at the sight of a laxative, "even though he did not get in touch with

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[395] Speaking of spirit in this context, Agrippa occasionally uses the terms "movement" (*movendo*) and "imprint" or "imprinted image" (*impressio*); see I 63, *DOP* 221–22.
[396] I 64, *DOP* 223, Tyson 201.
[397] *Ibid*.
[398] *Ibid*., *DOP* 222–23: *Sic videns alium oscitare etiam oscitat*. (...) *Aliqui cum audiunt acida nominare, lingua acescit*. (...) *Quidam sanguinis humani aspectu syncopantur*.
[399] I 66, *DOP* 228, Tyson 206: *quando ille medico adhibens fidem eo ipso sese disponit ad medentis et medicinae virtutem suscipiendam*.
[400] *De universo*, I, 1, 65 (see *DOP* 223 n. 1).

the substance of the medicine, nor with its smell or taste; only a kind of resemblance (*sola similitudo*) was apprehended by him."[401] One could thus say that the modern-day concepts of placebo and autosuggestion have their predecessors in Agrippa's and William's notion of *sola similitudo*.

Moving one step closer to the realm of esoteric phenomena, Agrippa discusses the power of passions *per modum imitationis* in dreams and in some trans-like states. It seems that the author implicitly attributes even greater powers to fantasy when it operates in such altered states of consciousness, not prohibited by the restrains of the normal state of mind. For instance, those who dream that they are burning in a fire are likely to have a strong and genuine impression of that particular kind of suffering: they are "tormented unbearably," says Agrippa.[402]

While one is tempted to downplay this and similar examples as mere indicators of a vivid imagination, the German humanist goes even further and speaks of some quite exceptional changes that the influence of passions can bring about, namely *bodily transformation* and *teleportation.* (In the second case Agrippa uses the verb *transportare*, but his account remarkably corresponds to the modern-day idea of teleportation.) He writes: "And sometimes men's bodies are transformed, and transfigured, and also transported, and this often [happens] when they are in a dream, and sometimes when they are awake."[403] The strange story of Genutius Cippus, a praetor of Rome, which Agrippa derives either from Ovid or Valerius Maximus,[404] provides an example of transformation *per modum imitationis*. Cippus was so absorbed in his thoughts of bullfight that he spent the whole night dreaming of this event and finally woke up with newly grown horns on his head. It was his intense passion,

[401] I 64, *DOP* 223, Tyson 201: *cum tamen nec substantia medicinae, nec sapor, nec odor ipsius ad ipsum pervenisset, sed sola similitudo apprehensa*.
[402] *Ibid*.: *Somniantes se ardere vel esse in igne quandoque cruciantur intolerabiliter, tanquam si vere ardeant*.
[403] I 64, *DOP* 223, Tyson 201: *Nonnunquam etiam ipsa humana corpora transformantur, transfiguranturque et transportantur, saepe quidem in somniis, nonnunquam etiam in vigilia*. This whole passage was added to the 1533 edition. Of course, given the literary character of the most of Agrippa's examples, it is hard to imagine that any of these additions were based on his own practical experiments.
[404] *Metamorphoses* 15. 6, c; *Val. Max*. V, 6.

mediated by fantasy, which elevated the "horn-making humors into his head and produced horns."[405] Agrippa's explanation of this bizarre incident is particularly important as it reveals his intention to emphasize the physiological basis of such phenomena:

> For a vehement cogitation, while it vehemently moves the species [of bodily spirits], pictures out the figure of the thing thought of, which they [*sc*. spirits] represent in their blood, and the blood impresses it on the members that are nourished by it, as upon those of the same body, so upon those of another's.
>
> *Vehemens enim cogitatio, dum species vehementer movet, in illis rei cogitatae figuram depingit quam illi in sanguine effingunt; ille nutritis a se imprimit membris cum propriis, tum aliquando etiam alienis*.[406]

The masculine plural pronoun *illi* here refers to various bodily spirits which receive through the medium of fantasy the impression or image (*figuram*) of the thing perceived. This image is literally impressed (*depingit, imprimit*) onto the spirits, and they in turn convey the impression to the blood, which carries it on to different parts of the body and moves them accordingly. The whole process can thus be understood as entirely natural, abiding by the laws of biology and physics. The same can be said, Agrippa adds, of St. Francis and his stigmata: his intense contemplation of Christ's wounds, aided by their innumerable pictorial representations that he could see everywhere, activated the whole chain of reactions that ultimately led to the appearance of stigmata.[407] As expected, Agrippa refrains from more esoteric explanations of the famous phenomenon; it befits his overall rhetorical strategy, which is based on the hierarchical arrangement of topics and a gradual exposition of his tenets from the natural to the supernatural context.

Agrippa's psychosomatic interpretation of St. Francis' stigmata (just like his overall treatment of the *vehemens imaginatio*) has a well-established medieval tradition beginning with the Dominicans, who as early as in the thirteenth century explained Francis' stigmata as the result of his ardent

[405] I 64, *DOP* 223, Tyson 201: *corniferos humores in caput elevante et cornua producente.*
[406] *Ibid.*
[407] *Ibid.:Francisci stigmata referre volunt, dum Christi vulnera vehementius contemplatur.*

imagination.[408] This explanation was reiterated by Petrarch in 1366 and employed, in Agrippa's own time, by Pietro Pomponazzi in his treatise *De naturalium effectuum causis sive de incantationibus* (1520).[409] In Agrippa's eclectic perspective, this naturalist tradition of interpreting stigmata and other bodily phenomena suits well his apologetic claim for the "naturalness" of magic in the first book of *De occulta philosophia*.

Another curious phenomenon caused by *passiones*, which Agrippa interprets again in a psychosomatic manner, is teleportation. He briefly discusses it in the same chapter but, oddly enough, does not provide any examples of the phenomenon. What the reader finds instead is a general explanation of the mechanism itself:

> Many are thus transported from place to place, passing over rivers, fires, and impassable places when any vehement desire or fear or intention are impressed upon their spirits and, being mixed with vapors, move the organ of the touch accordingly, together with fantasy, which initiates that particular motion. Whence they set into motion the members and organs of motion and are moved without any mistake unto the imagined place, not with the aid of sight, but from the interior fantasy. So great a power is there of the soul upon the body that, wherever it imagines and dreams that it goes, thither it carries and leads the body.
>
> *Sic multi etiam transportantur de loco ad locum, transeuntes flumina et ignes et loca inaccessa, quando videlicet vehementis alicuius concupiscentiae aut timoris aut audaciae species, spiritibus impressae, vaporibus permixtae movent organum tactus in sua origine una cum phantasia, quae motus localis principium est. Unde concitantur membra et organa motus ad motum moventurque sine errore ad locum imaginatum, non quidem ex visu, sed ex phantasia interiore: tanta est vis animae in corpus ut, quorsum ipsa imaginatur et somniat, ipsum corpus simul attollat atque traducat.*[410]

Again, the passions mediated by imagination move the spirits, which in turn influence various bodily

[408] This idea appeared in one of the four sermons that James of Voragine (ca. 1230–1298) dedicated to this topic. He based his argumentation on a broader set of medical theories that discussed the influence of imagination on the physical body: see Gábor Klaniczay, "Illness, Self-inflicted Body Pain and Supernatural Stigmata: Three Ways of Identification with the Suffering Body of Christ" in *Infirmity in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Social and Cultural Approaches to Health, Weakness and Care*, eds. Christian Krötzl, Katariina Mustakallio and Jenni Kuuliala (London and New York: Routledge, 2016): 119–36, discussion on 126–27. See also Carolyn Muessig, "The Stigmata Debate in Theology and Art in the Late Middle Ages" in *The Authority of the Word: Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400–1700,* eds. Celeste Brusati, Karl Enenkel, and Walter Melion (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 481–504, discussion on 484–86.

[409] In a letter to Tommaso Garbo Petrarch asserts that "the force of that thought [of the death of Christ] was able to pass from the soul into the body and leave visibly impressed in it the traces" (Petrarca, *Lettere senili* VIII, lettera 3, 465, quoted in Klaniczay, "Illness, Self-inflicted Body Pain and Stigmata," 126).

[410] I 64, *DOP* 223–23, Tyson 201–202.

parts and set the body into motion, in this case spatially. One might speculate that here Agrippa alludes to the ordinary phenomenon of moon walking, but the sheer dimensions of the spatial movement refute such an assumption: he mentions "passing over rivers, fires, and impassable places" and emphasizes that the *locus imaginatus* could be just everywhere (*quorsum*). The reader is thus left with no other choice but to imagine some sort of teleportation that occurs in an altered state of consciousness. Described in this way, the process appears remarkably physical: fantasy impresses the vehement passion onto the bodily spirits (*spiritibus impressae*) and in this way mixes it with the bodily vapors; subsequently, these move the members and organs of motion, and the body starts to move of itself "without any mistake" (*sine errore*), not by using its eyes (*non quidem ex visu*) but by relying on fantasy (*sed ex phantasia interiore*).

The phenomenon of teleportation described here bears certain similarities with another topic mentioned or discussed in a similar imagery throughout Agrippa's occult encyclopedia, that of the out-of-body experiences. This resemblance is suggested by Agrippa himself. At the end of the chapter, he briefly mentions that the influence of passions can lead to this type of experience too: "Sometimes, due to a vehement imagination or speculation, the soul is altogether abstracted from the body" (*sic anima nonnunquam per vehementem imaginationem vel speculationem a corpore omnino abstrahitur*).[411] Agrippa does not go into details on this matter, although he offers a literary example of a presbyter who could extend his sense perception far beyond its normal scope while remaining in a sleep-like state. This is a significant departure from Aristotle and Galen, as well as from Thomas Aquinas, who all maintain that the soul cannot exist out of the body during one's lifetime. Moreover, this remark paves the way for the next part of the discussion, in which the author examines the influence of passions that surpasses the body and pertains to the soul.

[411] I 64, *DOP*, 224, Tyson 202.

To sum up, the psychosomatic chain that I have so far examined could be roughly schematized in the following way:

Fantasy or imagination molds the bodily spirits by impressing onto them the images of the external world, which is perceived by the senses and interiorized in the form of the corresponding passions. The spirits convey the impression to various bodily parts and functions (organs, members, vapors) thereby initiating an appropriate psychosomatic reaction. This is the same chain that, according to Agrippa, forms the basis of magical influence.

The influence of passions upon other bodies and souls

Having ascertained that human passions, accompanied by fantasy as their main catalyst and mediator, are a powerful force that influences both body and mind, Agrippa goes a step further by claiming that, if particularly strong and channeled, they can influence other people too. In the opening sentence of *DOP* I 65 he writes:

> The passions of the soul which follow the fantasy, when they are most vehement, do not only change their own body, but also can transcend so as to work upon another body, so that some wonderful impressions are thence produced in elements and external things.
>
> *Passiones animae quae phantasiam sequuntur, quando vehementissimae sunt, non solum possunt immutare corpus proprium, verumetiam possunt transcendere ad operandum in corpus alienum, ita quod admirabiles quaedam impressiones inde producantur in elementis et rebus extrinsecis*.[412]

It is evident that the words *transcendere ad operandum in corpus alienum* ("transcend so as to work

[412] I 65, *DOP* 225, Tyson 204.

upon another body") refer, *inter alia*, to magical operation. However, Agrippa has in mind an even more fundamental mechanism of interaction, as indicated by his paradigmatic example of a pregnant woman who shapes her fetus by impressing upon it the marks of the things longed for.[413] In other words, this kind of influence can also be— and often is—spontaneous and unintended. Be it magical or not, it can take place only if there is a strong channeling of imagination: in order to be able to affect its own body and the bodies of others, imagination must "intend itself vehemently" (*vehementius se intenderit*).[414]

Among a number of examples for this "leap" of imagination that transcends its own somatic limitations, Agrippa stresses the phenomenon of the evil eye used by witches. Again, he explains it by resorting to the Ficinian pneumatology of vapors: having *channeled* their passions (in this case a desire to hurt, *nocendi cupiditas*) and having *shaped* their spirit accordingly, witches literally emanate this spirit (which is a kind of vapor itself, *vapores oculorum* in Agrippa's wording) from their eyes and send it to the eyes of another person. Once the "eye-ray" reaches the victim, the whole process begins in a somewhat retrograde direction: the witch's spirit moulds that of the victim, which then influences his or her psychophysical functions.[415]. Evidently, Agrippa regards the transmission of *vapores oculorum* as a flux of pneumatic rays. Based on this conviction, he warns against the influence of evil people, whose souls are "full of noxious rays" (*noxiorum plena radiorum*).

As I discuss in Chapter Three, there is a significant difference here between Agrippa and Marsilio Ficino in their treatment of eyesight vis-à-vis the transmission of spirits. In Ficino's theory of sensation, according to which the sense-organ is of the same substance as what is sensed, sound affects the bodily spirits more strongly than sight. On this ground, Ficino downgrades the power and magical

[413] *Ibid*.: *Sic praegnantis mulieris cupiditas in corpus alienum agit, quando inficit foetum in alvo rei desideratae nota*. The example was taken over from Ficino, *Tres libri de vita* III 16.
[414] I 65, *DOP* 226, Tyson 204. *Iamque his exemplis patet quomodo phantasiae affectus, ubi vehementius se intenderit, non modo corpus proprium sed et alienum afficiunt*.
[415] *Ibid*.

importance of sight.[416] As evident from the evil-eye paradigm described above, Agrippa departs from the Florentine humanist. His own theory of sensation attributes to eyesight the same spirit-like nature and qualities as it does to sound: various bodily spirits *can be transformed into eye-rays*, which is the only way to explain their ability to influence other people. Clearly, Agrippa adheres to al-Kindi's cosmic ray-theory and combines it with Ficino's doctrine of spirit to create a firm basis for his own theory of magical influence.[417]

The process of harmonization: capturing and exposing

In *DOP* I 66 the German occultist incorporates his discussion of passions into the overarching theme of cosmic correspondences examined throughout Book One and thus openly integrates it into his theory of magic. In the previous chapters he analyzed human passions from a general point of view, treating the transfer of influence as a natural phenomenon that occurs even in the world of animals.[418] Now he establishes an explicit link between the passions and celestial influences by introducing the idea of controlling, cultivating, and channeling the former so as to correlate them with the latter:

> The passions of the soul (…) become most powerful when they are in agreement with the heavens, be it a natural agreement or voluntary election, i.e. the free will. (…) It conduces therefore very much for receiving the benefits of the heavens if we too make ourselves suitable to it in our thoughts, affections, imaginations, elections, deliberations, contemplations, and the like.
>
> *Passiones animi* (…) *potentissimae evadunt, quatenus cum coelo consentiunt vel naturali quodam pacto vel voluntaria electione seu libero arbitrio.* (...) *Conducit ergo maxime in qouvis opere ad beneficia coeli suscipienda, si cogitationibus, affectibus, imaginationibus, electionibus, deliberationibus, contemplationibus et similibus nos*

[416] As discussed in the previous chapter, Ficino based his view on two arguments: 1) unlike eyesight, sound is a form of spirit; 2) sound transmits movements, whereas eyesight transmits only static images and is thus less powerful than sound. However, Ficino was not entirely consistent in his preference for hearing over eyesight: Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 7, n. 2, points to Ficino's hierarchical order of senses in which sight occupies the highest position.

[417] Al-Kindi (c. 801–873), an Arabic philosopher whose treatise *On the Stellar Rays* (*De radiis stellarum*, preserved only in a Latin translation) had a considerable influence on medieval natural philosophy and magic. According to him, all things are interconnected by the invisible stellar rays which form the basis of the cosmic correspondences. On Agrippa and Al-Kindi's theory see Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 116–19.

[418] He gives the examples of white peacock and basilisk: I 65, *DOP* 226.

quoque coelo consonos praestiterimus.[419]

This is a decisive step in Agrippa's treatment of the *passiones animi* as he calls for the self-conscious utilization of a natural propensity. The wording of the paragraph points to the main source of his idea: the phrases *beneficia coeli* ("the benefits of the heavens") and *coelo consonus* (literally "in tune with the heavens") betray a decisive Ficinian influence.[420] Throughout his *Tres libri de vita* Ficino speaks of the "consonance" of the human spirit with the heavenly rays which penetrate everything.[421] Sometimes he uses the adjective *cognatus* ("akin") instead of *consonus* as Agrippa does here, but the emphasis is always on the strong and fixed attention which can increase the degree of "kinship."[422] However, Ficino confines both the purpose and scope of this process of harmonization to one's own body and soul in the already discussed sense of medical and psychological self-help (with the exception of Book Three, where he cautiously discusses his spiritual program of becoming "as celestial as possible"). Influencing others in a direct way—that is, not as a physician who prescribes appropriate diets, music, perfumes, colors etc—is a *non plus ultra* for the Florentine humanist.

Agrippa emphasizes that the key element in the process of harmonization is a focused attention (*fixa intentio*). This point is evidently so important to him that he expresses it with two additional similar phrases in a single sentence, "firm adhesion" (*firma adhaesio*) and "strong application" (*vehemens applicatio*): "For, our mind accomplishes various things by faith, which is a firm adhesion, a fixed attention, and strong application either of the one who operates or the one who receives [the influence from above]." (*Multa enim mens nostra per fidem operatur, quae est firma adhaesio, fixa*

[419] Tyson 206, DOP 227, 19-26.
[420] Perrone Compagni notes that this whole section relies heavily on the *Tres libri de vita* III 22.
[421] In Ficino's interpretation, however, these heavenly rays are not directly related to the "eye-rays." See also Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 22–23.
[422] Ficino too uses the adjective *vehemens* ("energetic, vigorous") in conjunction with nouns such as *intentio, applicatio, affectus,* etc. Both in Ficino and Agrippa this type of syntagmata reads as a technical term loaded with a specific meaning. *Vehemens intentio* can be understood a special state of deep contemplation leading to an altered state of consciousness.

intentio et vehemens applicatio operantis aut suscipientis.)[423] This mental process can also be understood as channeling, or even binding, if the word *applicatio* in this sentence is taken in its original meaning as "the process of attaching." In other words, by focusing his mental forces the magician binds the desired "celestial benefits" to himself.[424]

How does one connect his passions to the celestial realm and what happens then? The answer Agrippa gives surpasses a mere transfer of bodily spirits that, somewhat simplistically, might be compared to contracting a virus from another person. I already described the first step in the process: the passions mould the bodily spirits to their likeness (*ad similitudinem suam*). Thus transformed, the spirits can cause various changes in the body and soul of the subject and in those of other people as well. But Agrippa seems to regard this phenomenon as superficial and accidental. According to him, a far more important thing can happen by channeling one's passions: one can be *noticed* by those higher entities who partake of the same kind of passions or spirits. To use a modern metaphor, the nature and type of passions and the corresponding spirits that one carries can serve as signposts along the cosmic highway of correspondences. Our strong passions, says Agrippa, "*suddenly expose* us and ours to the superior entities signifying the same type of passions" (*passiones…subito nos nostraque superis exponunt, eiusmodi passiones significantibus*).[425]

In my view, the idea of exposition stands in contrast to the idea of *capturing* heavenly influences expressed throughout Ficino's and Agrippa's works, usually with the verb *haurire* ("to imbibe"). Unlike capturing, which is an entirely active process, exposition bears a passive connotation and the implication that at one point *the subject of magical operation turns into its object*. In this sense, it is important that Agrippa describes exposition as happening "suddenly" or "immediately" (*subito*). It

[423] I 66, DOP 228, Tyson 206.
[424] For *applicatio* as "binding" or "joining" see OLD, 152, or LS, 142. Elsewhere Agrippa uses the term *ligatio*, which carries the same meaning.
[425] I 66, *DOP* 227, Tyson 206. Italics in the translation mine. It is not entirely clear to me what the plural neuter *nostra* means here. It could be understood as "surroundings," "environment," "things connected to us."

carries the implication that the magician is only in charge of the first part of the process, the "capturing." Once he is "recognized," the higher entities take over the initiative. Such conspicuous use of this adverb can also indicate an abrupt change of consciousness as in trans-like states or raptures. There is a thin but important line of difference in attitude here: the idea of being passively exposed to a higher entity does not sit well with Ficino's understanding of the licit natural magic, which excludes the involvement of higher intelligences and in which one remains in full command of the process of "breathing in the influx which comes from the deities."[426]

My interpretation of Agrippa's emphatic use of the adverb *subito* partly rests on several interesting terminological and semantic parallels. In describing the divine epiphany achieved by contemplation Plotinus uses the adverb ἐξαίφνης, which is the exact Greek equivalent for *subito*.[427] In other words, the desired effect of contemplation takes place all of a sudden. This adverb also appears twice in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. In the *Celestial Hierarchy* Pseudo-Dionysius compares the divine nature with fire and adds that it appears *suddenly*, naturally, and of itself. In his *Third Letter* he describes the revelation of Christ as "sudden."[428] Agrippa's idea of the magician's sudden rapture or transition to a trans-like state could have been inspired by these authors, both of whom he studied carefully. However, in lack of additional textual references this remains a tempting hypothesis.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the basis for this sudden recognition between the magus and various higher entities is the ontological kinship of all parts of the universe and, ultimately, the *Spiritus*

[426] *Spiritus enim…cognatior effectus numini, uberiorem haurit illius influxum*. (Ficino, Comm. on Plotinus, *Op. omn*., p. 1747).
[427] *Enn*. V, 3, 17: "We may know we have had the vision when the Soul has *suddenly* taken light" (Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 385); VI, 7, 36: "*Suddenly*, swept beyond it all by the very crest of the wave of Intellect surging beneath, [the quester] is lifted and sees, never knowing how" (*ibid*., 505). See also John Panteleimon Manoussakis, "The Promise of the New and the Tyranny of the Same," in *Phenomenology and Eschatology. Not Yet in the Now*, ed. Neal DeRoo, J. P. Manoussakis (New York: Routledge, 2016), 69–90; John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *God after Metaphysics. A Theological Aesthetic* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 65–66.
[428] Manoussakis, "The Promise of the New," 79–81, especially n. 33; Alexander Golitzin, "'Suddenly, Christ': The Place of Negative Theology in the Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagites," in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, ed. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 8–37.

Mundi as the omnipresent medium of that kinship. By recognizing a certain type of spirit in the human being higher entities recognize what they already partake of and the link is established *automatically* by the law of similitude—or, as Agrippa says, suddenly. The *passiones animi* are instrumental in this process: by their very nature, which is subtler than any material thing one uses for capturing celestial influences (such as minerals, plants, unguents, odors, etc.), they are more akin to higher entities and therefore more efficient in attracting their attention.[429] This kinship enables the soul "to conform to any star to such a degree that she is *suddenly* filled with the virtues of that star as it were a proper receptacle of its influence."[430] Interestingly enough, the adverb *subito* surfaces once again. It might point to Agrippa's understanding of the psychological impact of magical operation: it is supposed to result in an altered state of consciousness that occurs all of a sudden.

The power Agrippa attributes to human affects and emotions is clearly a resonance of Ficino's hierarchically and astrologically arranged scheme of things by which celestial influences can be attracted: out of the seven positions corresponding to the seven planets (or "seven steps from which something from on high can be attracted to the lower things," as Ficino describes it), affects and imagination (*vehementes imaginationis conceptus*) occupy the high fifth rank, leaving behind stones, metals, plants, animals, powders, odors, and even words, songs and sounds, and being surpassed only by discursive reason, intellectual contemplation, and divine intuition.[431] Passions could thus be said to represent a liminal element of natural magic, connecting it to the two higher forms, celestial and intellectual.

Based on the proposed "exposition–capturing" scheme, it follows that one of the most

[429] I 66, *DOP* 227–28, Tyson 206: *tum etiam, ob dignitatem et propinquitatem suam cum superioribus, multo magis atque amplius coelestia capiunt quam res quaevis materiales* ("and also by reason of their dignity and nearness to the superiors, they [passions] partake of the celestials much more than any material things").
[430] *Ibid.*: *Potest enim animus noster…ita alicui stellae conformari ut subito eiusdem stellae muneribus impleatur tanquam sui influxus proprium receptaculum*. Italics in the translation mine.
[431] *Tres libri de vita* III 21, in Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 355–57.

important things for the magus is to become *visible* by channeling his *passiones* and molding his spirit in an appropriate way. The sheer visibility—meaning, of course, cosmic visibility—triggers the rest of the process, which results in establishing a magical connection.

To sum up, the first book of the *De occulta philosophia* treats all those forms of magic whose basis is the sensible soul (*idolum*) with its faculties, especially fantasy/imagination. The magician's "fuel" are the stimuli received by the external senses (hence the emphasis on the use of minerals, herbs, unguents, etc.) and the corresponding affective states mediated by the internal senses. His main tool in exerting magical influence is spirit, molded according to the affective states and channeled by the magician's steady focus.

Agrippa's discussion moves in a carefully designed progression from merely describing a natural phenomenon to affirming it in what appears to be a supernatural context.[432] To emphasize it once again, the reason for such an approach is partly apologetic: for Agrippa, there seems to be a thin line between a pregnant woman whose thoughts and emotions shape her fetus and a magus who willingly affects other people. At first glance, it looks like a difference in degree, not in kind. In other words, the question is: are different types of "magical influence" determined only by the *intensity* of the affections involved? If yes, then magic pervades all the relations between living beings. All sentient creatures experience affective states of consciousness, and some of these states are intense enough to influence other creatures as well, although human beings alone have the capacity to channel their emotions and affects by using them to attract the attention of higher entities. Thus it needs to be examined whether the unconscious "magic" of a pregnant woman is indeed of the same kind as that of a magus fully dedicated to achieving spiritual ascension, or this identification only serves Agrippa's

[432] In the anthropological model that I propose the terms "natural" and "supernatural" can be taken to correspond to different levels or spheres of soul: everything that occurs in relation to the "operative soul", i.e. the one that is created and mortal (*idolum* and *ratio*), can be termed natural, and the sphere of the "true soul" (*mens*, with or without the lower two part united with it) can be deemed supernatural. Whereas *idolum* and *ratio* exist and operate *in natura*, the immortal and ever-lasting *mens* is *super naturam*.

apologetic and rhetorical purposes.

FIDES: OPERATING BY RELIGION

One should not conclude that all forms of magic described by Cornelius Agrippa must be interpreted by referring to mental focusing or channeling. After all, in a living universe interwoven with correspondences many phenomena carrying the label of natural magic take place independently of human involvement. One such prominent example is menstrual blood, which is attributed with various powers: it makes dogs mad if they taste it, it cures certain types of fever; a menstruous woman that walks naked around the crops in the field terminates all the flies, worms, and other sorts of vermin feeding off the crops, etc.[433] It carries magical power in and of itself, regardless of the involvement of human knowledge and intention.

However, Agrippa clearly regards such cases as the lowest forms of influence, which is indicated by the term he uses: instead of *magia* he calls them *veneficia* (sorceries).[434] This difference becomes prominent in Book Three, where the German occultist strongly advocates the abandonment of carnal affections and material passions for the sake of spiritual ascension, and the idea of focusing fits well into this context. The same idea appears even in Book Two, which otherwise offers little material for analyzing Agrippa's anthropological views. Aiming at the magician's mathematical knowledge (which is by definition rational and theoretical, devoid of any affects), this book mostly discusses abstract concepts such as numbers, geometrical figures, and proportions. Yet, even in such a context, the author emphasizes the importance of a focused attention, which he describes as a sort of meditation or contemplation. Agrippa suggests that it is not enough to be a skilled astrologer, to be familiar with number symbolism, the seals, sigils, and other planetary properties, with arithmetic proportions, etc.

[433] I 42, *DOP* 162, Tyson 123.
[434] *Ibid*.

Theory and mere procedures are insufficient in themselves. Thus, for instance, in *DOP* II 60 the author gives an important instruction on how to capture the influence of the Sun:

> As for example, the Sun is the king of the stars, most full of light, but receives it from the intelligible world above all other stars, because its soul is more capable of that intelligible splendor. Therefore, he who desires to attract the influence of the Sun must *contemplate* the Sun, not only by observing the exterior light, but also the interior. And no man can do this unless he *turns to the soul of the Sun and becomes like it*, and comprehends its intelligible light with an intellectual sight, as the sensible light with a corporeal eye.
>
> *Verbi gratia: Sol, rex stellarum, luce plenissimus, recipit illam a mundo intelligibili super omnes alias stellas, quoniam anima sua illius intelligibilis splendoris capacior existit; quapropter, qui Solis attrahere cupit influxum, oportet illum contemplari Solem non tantum speculatione exterioris luminis, sed etiam interioris; atque hoc nemo potest, nisi redeat ad ipsummet animum Solis evadatque illi assimilis visuque intellectuali comprehendat illius intelligibile lumen, sicuti oculo corporeo sensibile lumen*.[435]

Contemplating the souls of the stars, becoming like them, *comprehending* their interior, intelligible light—these ideas, appearing throughout the chapter, clearly point to something more than the common talismanic magic, in which the appropriate material, shape, time, and circumstances automatically capture the desired celestial rays. This closing chapter of Book Two, which appears only in the 1533 edition, marks an important point of transition towards the last book of the *De occulta philosophia*—the one in which Agrippa finally expounds the core of his doctrine: spiritual ascension by means of religious magic.

Acquiring the mind. The supercelestial Bacchus

As is well-known, the third book of Agrippa's occult encyclopedia treats the highest type of magic conceivable in a hierarchically organized universe. It is usually termed ceremonial or intellectual magic since it is conducted through religious-like rituals and addresses the highest entities in the created world, the incorporeal intelligences. For the reasons elaborated below, I prefer the term religious magic. In Book Three the German occultist deals with some of the most arcane topics such as the

[435] II 60, *DOP* 396, Tyson 431. Italics in the translation mine.

nature and names of intelligences, demons, and angels, their characters and seals, the techniques of summoning higher entities etc., but in a general and deliberately obscure way. However, his bold and extraordinary linking of magic to religion in the initial chapters is far from being obscure. In these chapters, Agrippa's idea that a true magus should be equally expert in natural philosophy, mathematics, and theology reaches its logical conclusion: having conquered natural and image magic, one should attempt to obtain the highest goal of all magic—to make one's mind divine and achieve spiritual regeneration.

This idea is laid down explicitly in the first chapter of Book Three, titled "On the necessity, power, and utility of religion" (*De necessitate, virtute et utilitate religionis*).[436] It is of utmost importance for my examination that in this chapter Agrippa directly links magic to piety. In other words, piety as a general inclination of the soul and faith as its main constituent present the magus with the best possible "fuel" to operate. This is so because the ultimate purpose of magic is no other than to teach one "how to obtain truth by divine religion" (*quomodo veritatem religione divina debeamus adipisci*).[437] In the anthropological terms discussed so far, it amounts to obtaining the mind (*mens*), a task that requires piety: "But, as Hermes said, we cannot obtain a firm and stout mind otherwise than by integrity of life, by piety and, last of all, by divine religion, for holy religion purges the mind and makes it divine" (*Firmam autem et robustam mentem, ut inquit Hermes, consequi non aliunde possumus quam a vitae integritate, a pietate, a divina denique religione*).[438]

In other words, religious magic, as Agrippa defines it, serves the purpose of bringing *idolum* and *ratio* to the level of *mens*. This is nothing less than the completion of the ultimate goal set in the very first sentence of the *De occulta philosophia*: to ascend to the archetypal world (*conscendere ad archetypum mundum*). Agrippa characterizes this goal as *entirely pious*:

[436] III 1, *DOP* 402–403, Tyson 441.
[437] *Ibid*, *DOP* 402.
[438] *Ibid*.

> To conclude, nothing is more pleasant and acceptable to God than a man perfectly pious and truly religious, who so far excels other men as He is distant from the immortal gods. Therefore, we ought, being first purged, to offer and commend ourselves to divine piety and religion.
>
> *Denique nil Deo gratius et acceptius quam homo perfecte pius ac vere religiosus, qui tam homines caeteros praecellit, quam ipse a diis immortalibus distat. Debemus nos igitur prius quidem purgatos offerre et commendare divinae pietati et religioni*.[439]

This statement is far from being a declaration of religious loyalty given as a safety precaution. The author here interprets piety *through* religious magic and vice versa, as two complementary phenomena. The pious man is he who excels others by virtue of acquiring the divine mind, which is the highest goal of magical operation. Agrippa views this achievement as *spiritual regeneration*, which is more than evident by his addressing God metaphorically as "that supercelestial Bacchus" (*supercoelestem illum Bacchum*), who is "the supreme ruler of the gods and priests, the author of regeneration, whom the old poets sang was twice born" (*summum deorum et sacerdotum antistitem, regenerationis autorem, quem bis natum veteres cecinere poëtae*).[440] It is the "transcendental Dionysus" who is pleased with the perfectly pious magus. Such a boldly chosen association, a metonymy based on the Greek myth of a twice-born god, unequivocally points to the magician's main task: to achieve spiritual rebirth. Just as Dionysus Zagreus, the cultic figure of the Dionysian mysteries, died and was reborn, so does the magus die to this worldly existence and is reborn as a son of God.[441]

Agrippa's understanding of *fides*

Going back to the *fixa intentio* passage quoted above, I want to emphasize several important points. I quote it once again: "For, our mind accomplishes various things by faith (*per fidem operatur*), which is

[439] III 1, *DOP* 402–403, Tyson 441.
[440] *Ibid.*
[441] Given his negative reception in Christian tradition, choosing Bacchus as a metonymy for God indeed sounds awkward and almost sacrilegious, even for an author as heterodox as Agrippa. However, it is only a further development of the term "celestial Bacchus" that he uses in *DOP* II, 58. According to Agrippa, this term comes from the Orphic hymns and denotes, in a metaphorical language, the cognitive aspect of celestial souls. Both Tyson and Perrone Compagni identify Ficino as Agrippa's source for the notion of the Celestial Bacchus: see Tyson 424, *DOP* 387.

a firm adhesion, a fixed attention, and strong application either of the one who operates or the one who receives [the influence from above]."[442] The phrase *operari per fidem* is given a prominent place here, just as in Book Three one comes across similar phrases, e.g. *operari per religionem* ("to operate by religion") or *operari per solam religionem* ("to operate by religion alone").[443] These expressions indicate that, in Agrippa's perspective, *fides* relates to religious magic in the same way as *passiones animi* relate to natural magic: the magus utilizes it as a powerful boost in his magical operation. However, the purpose of the operation is entirely different: while natural magic seeks to manipulate the *virtutes occultae*, religious magic aims at the restoration of man's soul to her divinity.[444]

Also, it should be noted that in this passage Agrippa uses the concept of *fixa intentio* to give a definition of *faith*. He says that faith is nothing else but a focused attention arising from a strong desire. In other words, it can be understood as a channeled, concentrated stream of particular states of mind directed by the magician's unfaltering will. To come upon such a simplistic—and yet psychologically sensitive—definition of faith in Agrippa is somewhat surprising. The phenomenon of *fides* is one of the most important questions for the German occultist and he examines it in several other works, where he takes a considerably different stance: *fides* is always seen as a divine virtue coming from above and enlightening the soul.

Another passage can be helpful in resolving this ambiguity. In the same chapter, in a similar context, Agrippa chooses different terms, which seem better suited to the "psychological" definition of faith. These are "confidence" (*confidentia*) and "credulity" (*credulitas*):

> Therefore those who operate in magic must be of a constant belief, trustful, and must not at all hesitate or have doubts about obtaining the result. For, as a firm and strong belief effects wonderful things (…) so distrust and indecision dissipate and break the strength of the operator's mind. Thus it happens that he is utterly frustrated of the

[442] I 66, *DOP* 228, Tyson 206.
[443] E.g. III 6, *DOP* 414–15, Tyson 455.
[444] See III 3, *DOP* 407, Tyson 448: religious magic is for Agrippa the art "which is both the beginning, perfection and key of all magical operations."

> desired influence of the superiors, as this influence cannot be joined and united to our labors without a firm and solid virtue of our soul.
>
> *Ideoque oportet in magia operantem esse constanti credulitate, confidentem et de consecutione effectus nullatenus dubitare nec animo haesitare; nam, sicut firma et pertinax credulitas mirabilia operatur ... sic diffidentia atque haesitatio virtutem animi operantis ... dissipat atque frangit. Unde contigit optatum a superioribus influxum frustrari atque deperdi, qui sine animi nostri stabili ac solida virtute rebus et operibus nostris coniungi atque uniri minime potest.*[445]

This indicates that here Agrippa uses the terms *fides*, *confidentia*, and *credulitas* synonymously, as denoting a focused state of mind and a steady determination requried for the magician. In other words, *fides*, linked here to the idea of *fixa intentio*, does not bear its common theological meaning and significance but serves to denote a particular state of consciousness, that of confidence and determination.

In the *De vanitate*, however, Agrippa views faith not merely as a state of mind or consciousness but as one of the archetypal *virtutes divinae* descending to the human intellect "by reflection from the first light" (*superne a primo lumine descendat*).[446] This view is in full concordance with those expressed in the young Agrippa's treatise *Liber de triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* (1516), particularly the fifth chapter of that work, where he defines faith as the only instrument of the soul desiring to know God and ascend to him.[447] The main topic of the *De triplici ratione* is not magic but epistemology—how man comes to know God. In this treatise, in a manner that seems typical of the *praeparatio evangelica*, Agrippa examines three ways to know God, or three books, as he calls them: the book of nature given to the heathens, the book of laws given to the Jews, and the book of the Gospels given to the Christians. However, his treatment of the last is not entirely evangelical: he stresses that the *liber Evangelii* surpasses the other two and is the perfect way to God, but his frame of

[445] I 66, *DOP* 228, Tyson 206. Here the translator copes well with the unexpected use of the word *credulitas*, which in this passage evidently bears the general meaning of "belief," whereas in a different context Agrippa uses it to denote credulity as opposed to the "true religion"; see, for instance, III 4, *DOP* 409.
[446] *De vanitate*, Ch. 61, in Agrippa, *Opera II*, 102.
[447] *De triplici ratione*, V, 15–16, in Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo*, 138–48.

reference is conspicuously Neoplatonic and Hermetic. Faith descends directly from the "first light" (*a primo lumine*) and is the only means for apprehending those things which are above the world (*sola potest ea quae supra mundum apprehendere*).[448] Moreover, it is the only "instrument" (*instrumentum*) by which one can approach God and obtain divine virtues (*qua sola ad Deum accedimus divinamque nanciscimur…virtutem*).

Significantly, in this passage Agrippa describes the process of approaching God through faith in terms of the "operative soul" being transformed into the "true soul." The soul (*anima*) should ascend to the mind (*in mentem*), its "head" and highest portion, and entirely turn herself into it.[449] He takes up this more "spiritual" understanding of faith in the third book of the *De occulta philosophia* too and views it as an emanated divine virtue which the magus can utilize as an *instrumentum* to climb back to the realm of transcendence: "It is the supreme virtue, grounded…on divine revelations wholly, piercing all things through the whole world…as it descends from above from the first light."[450] Finally, the author explicitly links faith to magical operation and its effects in the following way:

> To conclude, by faith man is made somewhat the same with the superior entities and enjoys the same power with them. […] For faith is the root of all miracles, by which alone (as the Platonists testify) we approach God and obtain the divine protection and power.
>
> *Denique per fidem efficitur homo aliquid idem cum superis eademque potestate fruitur. […] Est enim fides omnium miraculorum radix, qua sola (ut Platonici testantur) ad Deum accedimus divinamque adsequimur protectionem virtutemque*.[451]

The mention of divine protection is important as it points to one of Agrippa's main concerns: the problem of discerning between the benevolent and malevolent superior entities. It is another area in which *fides* plays a crucial role. It is not only a powerful force which pulls the magus upwards towards

[448] *Ibid.*, 140.
[449] Ibid.: *illa* [*sc. anima*] *quae ascendendo in mentem, caput suum, supremam eius partem, tota in eam convertitur*. The image of the mind as the head of the soul comes from the *Phaedrus* 246e–248b.
[450] III 5, *DOP* 412–13, Tyson 453: *Fides vero, virtus omnium superior…divinae revelationi tota innititur, per universum omnia lustrat…cum ipsa superne a primo lumine descendat*.
[451] *Ibid.*

the sphere of divinity; it is the perfect, infallible tool for the discernment of spirits (*discretio spirituum*), one of the gravest problems in ceremonial magic. "Whoever, therefore," says Agrippa, "lays religion aside and confides only in natural things very often becomes deceived by evil spirits; but from the knowledge of religion…arises a safeguard against evil spirits."[452]

To conclude, in the first five chapters of Book Three of the *De occulta philosophia* the author elaborately discusses religion and faith for a single purpose: to provide the overarching context for everything else that follows in that book. Without the notion of spiritual ascension achieved through the unification of the soul with the divine mind, the rest of the discussion on ceremonial magic largely remains a compendium of data collected from a variety of sources.

Dignification and corporal mortification

That religious magic is not only about "knowing" the appropriate rituals, angelic and demonic names, seals, sigils, etc., Agrippa makes clear by emphasizing that a true magician must fulfill certain requirements in order to be dignified for that sacred art. This kind of dignity is sometimes given to man as an inborn capacity, which the author defines as "the best disposition of the body and its organs, not obscuring the soul with any grossness and being without distemper."[453] In other words, it is a state of existence in which the body does not obscure or hinder the soul in any respect. Whoever does not possess such an innate advantage must recompense the defect of nature by a conscious, focused effort and practice. Agrippa refers to this process as dignification (*dignificatio*).

The first stage of dignification consists of learning, i.e. the acquisition of necessary occult and theological knowledge and skills. However, it only leads to the second and more important stage,

[452] III 1, *DOP* 402, Tyson 441: *Quicunque vero religione relicta naturalibus tantum confidunt, solent a malis daemonibus saepissime falli; ex intellectu autem religionis…nascitur…contra malos daemones tutamentum*. Based on the context of the discussion in this chapter it is clear that *intellectus religionis* does not pertain to theoretical knowledge.

[453] III 3, *DOP* 407, Tyson 448: *Naturalis dignitas ipsa est corporis organorumque optima dispositio, animam ipsam nulla crassitudine obscurans, nec ullo tumultu praeveniens.* The title of this chapter is "What dignification is required that one may be a true magician and a worker of miracles" (*Quae dignificatio requiritur ut quis evadat in verum magum et mirandorum operatorem*).

which can be best described as a state of deep contemplation in which the magician's soul turns inward and "converts itself into itself" (*animam ipsam contemplationi penitus admovere et in seipsam convertere*).[454] In this state of consciousness the magician realizes that the true miracle working comes from the *summa mens animae*, the highest faculty of the soul, which is ordinarily "overwhelmed by too much commerce with the flesh and occupied with the sensible soul of the body" (*nimio carnis demersus commercio et circa sensibilem corporis animam occupatus*).[455] Even though Agrippa is somewhat inconsistent here in claiming that the divine *mens* can be busied with *idolum* (as already discussed above, it is the middle part, *ratio*, which keeps that intermediary position), the underlying scheme is readily recognizable: the purpose of religious magic is to uplift the operator to the level of *mens*, where he obtains divine powers, but what drags him down is the flesh (*caro*) and the lowest part of the soul immersed in it:

> Therefore, we who endeavor to attain such a great height should especially meditate on two things: first, how we should leave carnal affections, frail senses, and material passions; secondly, by what way and means we may ascend to the pure intellect.
>
> *Oportet nos itaque, qui ad tantam celsitudinem nitimur, duo potissimum meditari: unum videlicet qua ratione affectus carnales caducumque sensum materialesque passiones deseramus; alterum qua via et quo modo ad purum ipsum intellectum ascendamus*.[456]

Divine powers are already in us, claims Agrippa, but we are hindered by carnal passions and immoderate affections from the moment of our birth. Once we dispense with these, the divine knowledge and powers instantly take place. Here the author calls for various religious practices such as prayer, consecrations, ritual purification etc., but also for an ascetic way of life that would tame the belligerent flesh and turn the sensitive soul upwards.

One finds this call for corporal mortification, expressed with very similar words, in the fifth

[454] III 3, *DOP* 408, Tyson 449. This is a distinctly Plotinian thought, a reverberation of the famous opening of his Eighth Tractate: "Many times it has happened: lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self-encentered" etc. (Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 334).
[455] III 3, *DOP* 407, Tyson 448.
[456] *Ibid*.

chapter of the *De triplici ratione*, where the author gives the following warning to prospective magicians:

> Thus our soul, imprisoned in this corruptible flesh and being too immersed in its activities, attempts in vain to reach the divine unless she raises above the way of the flesh and, having obtained her pristine nature, becomes the pure mind.
>
> *Anima itaque nostra, carne inclusa corruptibili nimioque eius demersa commercio, nisi viam carnis superaverit fueritque pristinam naturam sortita evaseritque mens pura, frustra laborat in divinis*.[457]

In addition to supporting my thesis that Agrippa views corporal mortification as part of magical dignification, this passage corroborates two other points that I made earlier in my discussion: 1) for Agrippa, ascension implies the transformation of *anima* into *mens* (or the "operative" into the "true" soul), and 2) in this respect, his attitude is strongly marked by anthropological dualism, whereby the "flesh" is seen as an impediment to the "pure mind."[458]

With the distance between the *De triplici ratione* (1516) and the *De occulta philosophia* (1533) being about eighteen years, a letter dated 1527 makes a convenient in-between case that testifies to the stability of Agrippa's convictions. Writing to Aurelius Aquapendente, an Augustinian monk and his longtime friend, he gives an important summary of these convictions—again, in a very similar wording:

> Now, concerning that philosophy that you require to know, I would have you know that it is to know God himself, the worker of all things, and to pass into him by a whole image of likeness…whereby you should be transformed and made as God. […] This is that true, high occult philosophy of wonderful works. Its key is the intellect, but it cannot be united to those divine virtues if it is included in the corruptible flesh, unless it exceeds the way of the flesh and obtains its proper nature. [...] For how shall he who has lost himself in mortal dust and ashes find God? How shall he apprehend spiritual things if he is swallowed up in flesh and blood? For we must die, I say die to the world, and to the flesh and all senses, and to the whole man animal.
>
> *Iam vero quod ad postulatam philosophiam attinet, te scire volo, quod omnium rerum*

[457] *De triplici ratione* V, 16 in Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo*, 142. Translation mine.
[458] See Chapter Three of this thesis, the subchapter titled "The Second Triad: *Mens*, *Ratio*, *Idolum*."

> *cognoscere opificem ipsum Deum et in illum tota similitudinis imagine…transire, quo ipse transformeris efficiareque Deus. […] Haec est illa vera et summa mirabilium operum occultissima philosophia. Clavis eius intellectus est. Verum intellectus noster carni inclusus corruptibili, nisi viam carnis superaverit fueritque propriam naturam sortitus, divinis illis virtutibus non poterit uniri. […] Quomodo enim qui in cinere et mortali pulvere seipsum amissit Deum ipsum inveniet? Quomodo apprehendet spiritualia carni immersus et sanguini? […] Mori enim oportet, mori, inquam, mundo et carni, ac sensibus omnibus, ac toti homini animali.*[459]

Based on these statements coming from three very different periods of Agrippa's life, I conclude that his understanding of religious magic is predominantly Neoplatonic and Hermetic in that he evaluates the body and its entanglement in the elemental world as the main obstacles to accomplishing spiritual ascension. In all the quoted passages he clearly links the process of magical dignification to that of corporal mortification, in a way which is closely reminiscent of the Hermetic ideas of "ripping off one's tunic" and removing "the garment of ignorance."[460]

The magic of Logos. Theurgy

From all the above said, it is clear that Cornelius Agrippa does make a substantial difference between natural and celestial magic on the one side and religious magic on the other: the first two are forms of magic related to the "operative soul," that part of soul which functions within the created world; the third is a type of magic reserved for the immortal *mens*, although it *cannot exclude* the lower parts of soul. In *DOP* III, 6 Agrippa gives an important warning in this regard when he says that "no man can work by pure religion alone *unless he be made totally intellectual*" (*nemo potest operari per puram and solam religionem, nisi qui totus factus est intellectualis*).[461] Within Agrippa's tripartite psychological scheme, becoming "totally intellectual" cannot mean anything else but achieving the state of union with *mens*. Unless one has achieved that state, Agrippa warns, operating "without the mixture of other

[459] *Agrippa Aurelio ab Aqua-pendente, Epist*. V, 19 (Lyons, 19 November 1527) in *Opera*, 879–80. Tyson, 681–82, gives an English translation by James Freake. Perrone Compagni's critical edition does not contain this important letter.
[460] *CH* VII 2–3, Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 24. See Chapter Three, 115–17.
[461] *DOP* 414–15, Tyson 455. The italics in the translation mine. I will return to this important point once again in the next chapter.

[i.e. lower] powers" (*sine admixtione aliarum virtutum*) is dangerous and the operator might easily be "swallowed up by the divine power" and end up dead (*absorbetur a numine nec diu poterit vivere*). That is to say, one's current position on the emanational vertical determines the type of magic—or, better said, the mixture of various types of magic—one is supposed to use. The closer one is to *mens*, the more safely and efficiently one can rely on religious magic. Thus it might be said that the lower forms of magic serve as a kind of *praeparatio theurgica*.

Undoubtedly, Agrippa views all the three types as interrelated aspects of a *unified system* of subordination, communication, and influence (i.e. the cosmos) and recognizes the underlying cosmological and anthropological principles that make any magical operation possible at all. Nevertheless, in Agrippa's hiearachical model, religious magic appears as a *sui generis* phenomenon both with regard to its purpose and its modus operandi: only through religious magic can one ultimately achieve what Agrippa sets as the ultimate goal of the true magician—spiritual ascension and rebirth—and to achieve that goal it is not enough to rely on the law of cosmic correspondences. In Agrippa's view, it appears that the cosmic membrane dividing the sphere of transcendence from the created world is only semipermeable and that to penetrate it *from below* one needs a much greater force than the common "fuel" for natural and celestial magic.

A magus aspiring for spiritual ascension must consciously and carefully cultivate his piety and purify himself both internally (through a contemplation of divine things and corporal mortification) and externally (through religious rites). He should strive to perfect his dignity by engaging in religious ceremonies, expiations, consecrations, etc. Agrippa views all these activities as "external" and, in fact, defines religion in general as "a certain discipline of external holy things," but even in this capacity it plays a crucial role for the following reason:

> Therefore, religion is a certain discipline of external holy things and ceremonies by which, as it were by certain signs, we are admonished of internal and spiritual things,

> and it is so deeply implanted in us by nature that we differ from other creatures more by this than by rationality.
>
> *Est itaque religio disciplina quaedam externorum sacrorum ac ceremoniarum, per quam rerum internarum et spiritualium tamquam per signa quaedam admonemur; quae ita nobis a natura insita est, ut plus illa quam rationabilitate a caeteris animantibus discernamur*.[462]

This definition reveals the esoteric character of Agrippa's sense of religiosity, as discussed in the Introduction of my work. To remind the reader, I proposed to designate the German humanist's spiritual worldview as esoteric precisely on account of the clear distinction he makes between external and internal religion—one of the defining traits of esotericism.[463] At best, external religion is regarded by esotericists as auxiliary, and this attitude is evident in the above-quoted statement too. Internal religion, esoteric religion, is something altogether different from religious customs, rites, and ceremonies.

And yet, although Agrippa views religion as something external, it is still necessary both as a means for purification from sensual passions and as a catalyst for achieving a sort of anamnesis, a reawakened memory of one's primordial state. In addition, religious practice provides the necessary *discretio spirituum* (discernment of spirits): "Whoever neglects religion … and confides only in the strength of natural things is very often deceived by the evil spirits" (*Quicunque ea neglecta naturalium viribus tantummodo confidunt solent a malis daemonibus saepissime falli*).[464]

If common religious practice (by which Agrippa seems to imply, among other things, attending the Mass and taking the Eucharist) is considered external, what would constitute *internal religion* in his view? I argue that, based on his discussion in Book Three of the *De occulta philosophia*, internal religion is not different from religious magic and its rituals as Agrippa understands them. Due to his

[462] III 4, *DOP* 409, Tyson 450. The whole passage appears only in the 1533 version, which additionally underlines the position it presents. Agrippa's definition of religion closely corresponds to one of the two criteria defining esotericism discussed in the Introduction, namely separating "inner mysteries of religion" from their "external manifestations." This important point is discussed at length in Chapter Five, in my examination of Agrippa's religious self-identification.
[463] On esotericism as a typological construct see Introduction, 23 and n. 32.
[464] III 4, *DOP* 409, Tyson 450.

custom of writing in the manner of *dispersa intentio* (or intentional ambiguity), it is difficult to reconstruct a coherent system of religious magic (especially with regard to concrete ritualistic procedures, of which Agrippa says next to nothing).[465] However, once the reader gets through the thick bushes of theoretical discussions on angelic and demonic names, seals, sigils, consecrations, frenzies, etc., a clearer picture begins to emerge of what could be the core of Agrippa's religious magic: it is the pious *contemplation and invocation of the divine names*. The author obviously does not have in mind just a form of prayer; invocation should be understood as a ritual performance preceded by—or accompanied with—the above-discussed procedures of dignification and purification.

In *DOP* III, 10–12 Agrippa discusses the divine names and their powers in various religious traditions, most notably the Kabbalah, and emphasizes their *emanational character*: "God … has diverse names, which … expound … certain properties flowing from him, by which names he *pours down*, as it were *by certain conduits*, on us and all his creatures many benefits and gifts" (*Deus … sortitur diversa nomina … quae exponent quasdam proprietates ab eo emanantes; per quae nomina in nos et ea, quae creata sunt, multa beneficia et munera velut per canales quasdam distillant*).[466] By applying the logic delineated in the opening sentence of the *De occulta philosophia* (i.e. emanation enables ascension), Agrippa concludes that

> [t]hese names of God are the most fit and powerful means of reconciling and uniting man with God. (…) The religious observation and devout invocation [of these names] with fear and trembling yield us great virtue and deifying union, and gives a power to work wonderful things above nature.
>
> *Haec itaque divina nomina sunt aptissimum atque efficacissimum medium hominis cum deo conciliandi atque uniendi. (…) Quorum religiosa observatio devotaque cum timore*

[465] Some hints can be found e.g. in *DOP* III, 11 and III, 24. See also Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 200: "The reader may now expect (or hope for) a reconstruction of a demonic summoning ritual, incorporating all these elements in some fashion, perhaps with commentary. Unfortunately, I cannot fulfil that hope without wild speculations extending the present analysis far beyond *DOP* and into the literature of ritual magic more generally; in short, Agrippa simply does not provide sufficient information to perform the reconstruction." Nevertheless, Lehrich does make an attempt to reconstruct a ritual of religious magic, of which see ibid., 200–206.

[466] III 11, *DOP* 427, Tyson 474. Italics in the translation mine.

> *ac tremore invocatio virtutem nobis magnam praestant deificamque unionem atque etiam supra naturam mirabilium operum effectuumque potentiam*.[467]

Finally, in *DOP* III 36 the author fully explicates this notion, by which he openly theologizes magic and links it to the doctrine of the Logos or Verbum Dei. It is significant that the conceptual framework he employs in developing his idea is both Hermetic and Christian. He equates the Hermetic Word, which is the first image of the Mind,[468] with Jesus Christ, "the Word of the Father made flesh,"[469] and consequently equates the emanation of the Word with the incarnation of Christ. In Agrippa's understanding, the Word of God is received *through the process of emanation* just like any other *virtus divina* and this is what confers to man's words the power of invoking God's names with miraculous effects:

> Therefore, all our speech, words, spirit and voice have no power in magic unless they are formed by the divine Word. (…) Our words can do very many miracles if they are formed by the Word of God. (…) This is the power of the Word formed by the mind and received into a subject rightly disposed, as seed into the matrix for the generation.
>
> *Omnis itaque sermo noster, omnia verba, omnis spiritus et vox nostra nullam virtutem habent in magia, nisi quatenus divina voce formentur*. (…) *Verba nostra plurima producere possunt miracula, modo formentur verbo Dei*. (…) *Haec est potentia verbi a mente formata in subiectum rite suscepti, veluti semen in matricem ad generationem*.[470]

If read in correlation with the already discussed role of faith and with the eulogy of the Word of God in Chapter 100 of the *De vanitate*, this statement proves that, for Agrippa, the highest form of religious magic is one based on invoking divine names with the intention of achieving mystical union with God and partaking of his powers.

This begs the question whether religious magic should be termed magic at all. Wouter

[467] III 11, *DOP* 430, Tyson 475.
[468] CH I, 6, Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 2.
[469] III 36, *DOP* 513, Tyson 582.
[470] III 36, *DOP* 512–13, Tyson 582. This is a rare instance where Agrippa refers to Lodovico Lazzarelli and quotes from his *Crater Hermetis*, which contains very similar ideas. I discuss this link in Chapter Five. The importance of the Word of God and the incarnation of Christ in Agrippa's magical theory has been keenly recognized by Christopher Lehrich, but he seems to restrict the role of these theological concepts to natural magic only, which he calls "a magic of logos" (Lehrich, *The Language od Demons and Angels*, 98–99). In my view, it makes sense to extend this qualification to the type of magic based on the invocation of divine names.

Hanegraaff points out that Agrippa's division of magic into three levels probably followed Johan Reuchlin's categorization of the *ars miraculorum* into physics, astrology, and magic.[471] Agrippa adopted the term "magic" as the umbrella term for all three levels, but Reuchlin reserved it only for the third level, which he divided into superstitious *goetia* and religious *theurgia*. Hanegraaff concludes—and, based on my analysis, I concur—that Agrippa "certainly agreed with Reuchlin that while the three are intimately connected, the true and pure magic that his work was all about was the divine theurgy belonging to the third level."[472] Consequently, terming Agrippa's religious magic theurgy would make a welcome distinction from the lower types of magical influence discussed in the first part of this chapter. Theurgy is the only type of magic that pertains to the immortal, transcendent part of soul. It is the magic of *mens*.

However, the third book of the *De occulta philosophia* is not *only* about religious magic, the one that focuses on a direct communication between man and God. Much of it is also dedicated to what might be termed *demonic* magic—in the sense of operating with incorporeal intelligences other than God who serve as various intermediaries—but not with the common Christian understanding of the word "demonic." Yet, there is no real inconsistency here. First, it is well known that Agrippa's proclaimed intention was to theoretically cover all the existing types of magic, from the lowest to the highest, which he eventually did in a quasi-neutral, encyclopedic way. Secondly, it is clear that Agrippa's understanding of the term *daemon* was vastly different from that of the majority of mainstream theologians. As Benedek Láng points out, there was a certain confusion throughout the Middle Ages caused by the fact that "the medieval concept of 'demon' was born of two different traditions: the Christian notion of 'demon' as a fallen angel working under the Devil, and the Greco-Roman concept of a more material 'daimon,' who is a neutral (even occasionally benign), powerful,

[471] Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 7, referring to Reuchlin, *De verbo mirifico*, 2.
[472] Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 7–8.

and knowledgeable spirit who, in certain circumstances, may obey its invoker."[473] This confusion was partly reflected in Agrippa himself: as I discuss in Chapter Five, he did share the Christian notion of "demon" to some extent (as evident from his treatise *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum*), but his predominant view in this regard was nevertheless Platonic; in other words, *daemones* were simply incorporeal intelligences, whether good or bad.[474] Provided that the magician knew how to maintain his *discretio spirituum,* communicating with good demons could only foster his ascension towards the *Summus Archetypus*. Therefore, given the deeply rooted perception of the term "demonic" in Christianity (and especially the spurious Fourth Book of the *Occult Philosophy*), I find that the term "demonic magic," if not carefully qualified, lacks analytical precision and might even be misleading.

As for theurgy, I want to use this term to further scrutinize the nature of Agrippa's Neoplatonic convictions. I suggest that his understanding of what the "good half" of religious magic is does not only rest on Reuchlin's theurgia/goetia division, but also on Agrippa's adherence to the legacy of ancient Neoplatonists, most notably Iamblichus of Chalcis (c. 245–c. 325 AD), a Syrian Neoplatonist and a disciple of Plotinus' disciple Porphyry. To my knowledge, Agrippa does not use the term *theurgia* in the *De occulta philosophia*. He rather sticks—much to his later interpreters' dismay—to his preferred blanket-term "magic." Yet, it is possible to draw certain parallels between Agrippa's notion of religious magic as delineated in his esoteric encyclopedia and Iamblichus' concept of θεουργία.

Agrippa explicitly refers to the Syrian Neoplatonist several times, although usually as one of

[473] Láng, *Unlocked Books*, 21. Láng points to the examples of medieval authors who held more positive views on the nature and activities of demons, such as Johannes of Francofordia, a professor of theology at the University of Heidelberg, or Witelo, a Polish-born scholar from the thirteenth century.

[474] The *De occulta philosophia* is replete with instances of such understanding. A good example is the already quoted passage from III 37, *DOP* 514–15, Tyson 585, where Agrippa describes how upon death the soul is escorted by its "genii, keepers, and daemons" to the judge (see Chapter Three, 116 n. 275). Consider also the title and the content of III 32, *DOP* 497–501, Tyson 566–68: *Quomodo alliciantur a nobis boni daemones et quomodo mali daemones a nobis convincantur* ("How good demons may be called up by us, and how evil demons may be overcome by us"). Obviously constrained by the mainstream understanding of daemons, James Freake mistranslated this word in the title as "spirits"—for how can a demon be good?

the authoratitative *Platonici* whose arguments he merely reiterates.[475] However, some of these mentions are not simply for the sake of piling up references but reveal Agrippa's familiarity with Iamblichus' teachings.[476] This is not surprising if one recalls that in 1492 Marsilio Ficino published his translations of Iamblichus, Proclus, Porphyry, and Psellus, which Agrippa must have read if not possessed. One of the treatises in this collection was Iamblichus' *Letter of Porphyry to Anebo*, which Ficino translated as *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, Assyriorum*. It is to this work that Agrippa, openly or tacitly, refers a number of times in his *De occulta philosophia*.

Iamblichus' theurgical Platonism marks a significant point of departure from Plotinian contemplative Platonism. Employing the term θεουργία, for which the earliest surviving record is found in the *Chaldean Oracles* (second century AD), he used it to denote "a series of rituals and practices with the goal of attaining the divine essence by discovering traces of the divine in the different layers of being."[477] In what Fritz Graf calls the "religious turn" in the late antique Greek philosophy,[478] Iamblichus distanced himself from Plotinus' doctrine of contemplation as being based merely on "god-talk" or theology, which he deemed insufficient for achieving ascension. As Gregory Shaw puts it, "Iamblichus's distinction between theurgy and theology is crucial for understanding his Platonism. Theology was merely *logos*, a 'discourse about the gods,' and however exalted, it remained a human activity, as did philosophy. Theurgy, on the other hand, was a *theion ergon*, a 'work of the gods' capable of transforming man to a divine status."[479]

According to Shaw, the main difference between theurgical and non-theurgical Platonism is in

[475] For instance, in *DOP* I 2, I 38, II 32, III 11. In addition to these explicit mentions, Perrone Compagni detects a number of unacknowledged references to Iamblichus' *De mysteriis*, on which see her Index nominum, *s.v.* Iamblichus, *DOP* 638.
[476] For instance, Iamblichus' discussion on fate in relation to celestial bodies, from *De mysteriis* 8, 7, which Agrippa comments upon in *DOP* III 59.
[477] Paul M. Collins, "Between Creation and Salvation. Theosis and Theurgy," in *Deification in Christian Theology*, ed. Vladimir Kharlamov (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 2012), 192–204, quote on 193. However, just like in Agrippa's case, Iamblichus does not provide any specific details on, or descriptions of, theurgic rites. He is only interested in providing a philosophical rationale for theurgy; see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 47.
[478] See Chapter One, 74 and n. 174.
[479] Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 5.

the attitude towards the cosmos. Whereas for Plotinus sensible matter is evil, and Nature is perceived as a "demon enchantress,"[480] Iamblichus adopts a more positive view on the world and does not exclude it from his project of ascension. What is at stake here is the divinity of the world: in both Plotinus' and Iamblichus' perspective, it is emanated from the One, but while the former sharply distinguishes between the sensible and the noetic realms, the latter views them as intertwined.[481] Thus, according to Iamblichus, matter not only can but *must* be engaged in the process of ascension. By its own theurgy the soul imitates the divine demiurgy and uses the same, already existing cosmic ladder.

I believe it is evident from the above that Agrippa's own view on spiritual ascension bears more similarities with Iamblichus' concept of theurgy than with Plotinus' idea of pure philosophical contemplation. Agrippa's understanding of the cosmos as a divine emanation with the uninterrupted connection to the realm of transcendence, as I discussed at length in Chapter Two, justifies his own preference for religious magic in the same way as Iamblichus' cosmological views do for theurgy. Moreover, just like Agrippa, Iamblichus treats the phenomenon of souls' embodiment with much less optimism.[482] As opposed to divinely emanated matter that can serve as cosmic instrument for ascension, the body, according to Iamblichus, traps and impedes the soul in the same way as Plotinus taught. For this reason, a theurgist must live an ascetic, pious life and commit himself to ritual purifications and consecrations.[483] Interestingly, Iamblichus too differentiated between theurgia and goetia by viewing the former as intrinsically related to gods and the latter as an indication of arrogance

[480] *Enn*. IV 4, 43–44. In this section Plotinus also expresses his refusal of magic by viewing it as intrinsically linked to Nature, whose "sorcery is to pursue the non-good as a good" (Plotinus, *The Enneads*, 331). In other words, magic is the means by which Nature enchants souls. On the other hand, "[c]ontemplation alone stands untouched by magic" (*ibid*., 330).
[481] For a detailed discussion on these issues see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 1–45. Although I disagree with Shaw on the matter of the Plotinian soul, as noted in Chapter Three, I consider the other aspects of his analysis highly convincing and, in a comparative perspective, relevant for my own analysis of Agrippa's magic.
[482] *Ibid*., 37–44.
[483] This fine distinction between cosmic and bodily matter—that is, the "good" and the "bad" matter—is aptly expressed by Iamblichus in the following words: "One must not, after all, reject all matter, but only that which is alien to the gods" (*De mysteriis* V, 23, in Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, translated with an introduction and notes by Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], 269).

and impiety.[484]

In conclusion, Agrippa's Neoplationism is Plotinian with regard to the problem of the soul's descent (as discussed at the end of Chapter Three),[485] but Iamblichean when it comes to the question of its ascent and ultimate deification. However, being a Christian dedicated to prayer and theological introspection, Agrippa took care not to disregard the idea of contemplation but rather accepted it as being complementary to the idea of theurgy.

To sum up, in this chapter I mostly analyzed Agrippa's approach to magical operation in a psychological perspective. I showed that it is intrinsically related to his view of the human soul as a partly descended, tripartite entity and I examined the role of the external and internal senses vis-à-vis each of the three psychic components. In this context, I examined how the magician, according to Agrippa, utilizes various emotional and affective states in his operation and how the nature of these states determines the purpose and scope of magical operation. In this regard, the crucial concept is that of *passiones animi*, which covers the entirety of psychological states and which accounts for the magician's ability to exert influence beyond his own body and soul. By combining the Ficinian doctrine of *spiritus* and al-Kindi's ray-theory Agrippa explains in detail the mechanisms of magical operation, while at the same time he stresses the importance of focused attention as a necessary element in any form of magic. Finally, I demonstrated that, for Agrippa, intellectual or religious magic serves ultimately one purpose: that of obtaining the divine mind, i.e. uniting the lower parts of the soul with the highest one. It is thus evident that, in Agrippa's perspective, magic in its highest form of appearance bears a predominantly religious significance. As such, it is fully comparable to Iamblichus's notion of theurgy, from which, as I argued, Agrippa draws much of his understanding of magic.

[484] E.g. *De mysteriis*, I, 21; III, 18–19.
[485] Iamblichus viewed the soul as fully descended; see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 1–27). As I demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, Agrippa, following Plotinus, developed a notion of the partly descended soul.

CHAPTER FIVE

ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: THE FALL AND SALVATION

So far my analysis has been limited to Cornelius Agrippa's understanding of man's nature *within* the created world and its temporal frame. This is reflected in the way he treats anthropological issues in the *De occulta philosophia*: this work does not at all deal with the cause of man's fall or with the way it happened. Although man's fallen state is implied throughout Agrippa's discussion, he does not dwell on that topic in particular. Agrippa's man is a divine soul encapsulated in the physical body through a range of intermediaries with an increasing degree of materiality. In contrast to the mainstream Christian doctrine, the psychic component can function independently of the somatic one even during man's lifetime. In the perspective of the *De occulta philosophia*, the fall does not pertain to the physical body, which properly belongs to the elemental world and is only a receptacle, but to the soul that departs from the realm of transcendence, in a process in which the divine *mens* is emanated into the celestial *ratio* and the semi-earthly *idolum*.

The fall is explicitly mentioned in *DOP* III 40, where one reads of the "sin of transgression" due to which man fell from his prelapsarian dignity,[486] but the author's attention is mostly focused on the lost divine powers and the ways to regain them. He speaks of these powers as divine "characters" imprinted on man and points out that they are blurred according the degree of man's sinfulness: "Yet this character is not altogether extinct in us. But to the extent one is laden with sin, so much farther off is he from these divine characters and receives less of them" (*neque tamen omnino character ille in nobis extinctus est, sed quanto magis quis gravatur peccato, tanto magis a divinis istis characteribus*

[486] III 40, *DOP* 520, Tyson 591: *Verum post praevaricationis peccatum a dignitate illa decidit cum omnibus posteris suis.*

longius abest minusque recipit).[487] However, Agrippa does not specify the nature of that sin. The reason for this could be that he already dealt with that problem in some of his earlier writings, most notably in his exegetical treatise the *De originali peccato*. Having already diagnosed the problem, so to speak, he now offers his solution to it: a program of spiritual ascension aiming at *renovatio* or *regeneratio*. This goal is achieved when *ratio* and *idolum* are purified, uplifted, and ultimately united with *mens*.

In this chapter I examine those of Agrippa's works that contain his views on man's prelapsarian state and the fall. These are, as I already mentioned, the *De originali peccato* and, to a lesser extent, the *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum*, Agrippa's treatise written in Italy. In the first part of the chapter I demonstrate how in these works Agrippa coalesces the Christian and Hermetic narratives of the fall and how it reflects on his anthropological views. In the second part I examine the ways in which Agrippa's eclectic understanding of man's prelapsarian position and fall affected his notion of piety and his religious identity.

THE ORIGINAL SIN

To begin with, it is significant that Agrippa uses the very term "sin" (*peccatum*). It indicates that, at least to some extent, he embraces the Christian paradigm of man's fall. The Neoplatonic and Hermetic interpretations of the problem of soul's embodiment, even when they view it as a kind of fall, do not entail a clearly developed theological and ethical concept of sin.[488] Thus, it can be said that Agrippa's treatment of this problem represents the more Christian side of his eclectic theological thought, even though it is sometimes difficult to discern at which point his understanding of Christian doctrines overlaps with his Neoplatonic and Hermetic convictions.

[487] *Ibid.*

[488] The *Corpus Hermeticum* does recognize the term κακία ψυχής ("the evil of soul"), which Copenhaver translates as "vice" (e.g. *CH* X, 8, in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 32). It is defined as ignorance (ἀγνωσία) and bears certain similarities to the concept of sin but is not identical with it.

Liber de triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum

In this treatise, which Vittoria Perrone Compagni calls the first autonomous exposition of Agrippa religious thought,[489] the German humanist centers his discussion around the problem of epistemology, namely how man comes to know God, not in terms of theoretical knowledge (ἐπιστήμη, *scientia*) but as an inner, experienced realization of the divine realm (γνῶσις, *cognitio*).[490] In what appears as a conceptual framework of *praeparatio evangelica*, he discusses the three ways—or books, as he calls them—by which man obtains the knowledge of God: in a hierarchical order, he examines the book of nature given to the pagan wise men, the book of laws given to the Jews, and finally the book of the Gospels given to the Christians as the perfect way of knowing God. Agrippa's evident preference for γνῶσις over ἐπιστήμη leads him to a fierce attack on scholastic theologians, whose custom of vain and ostentatious disputation he even proclaims diabolical.[491] As I already discussed, Agrippa's interest in the knowledge of God surpasses theoretical considerations: his goal is to reach God (*ad Deum accedimus*) by ascending to the divine mind (*ascendendo in mentem*).[492] He sees this process as the restoration of man's pristine dignity, which he expounds in the first book of the treatise.[493] This is where the reader finds Agrippa's account of the fall, which is closely based on Biblical references.

The fall of angels led by Satan preceded that of man.[494] Not content with their sublime position, ambitiously striving for more, some angels rebelled against God and for that transgression they were expelled from their divine abode. However, the very words Agrippa attributes to Satan as an announcement of his intentions reveal potential flaws in the basis of his (Agrippa's) spiritual synthesis:

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[489] Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo*, 52.
[490] This difference pertains to what Wouter Hanegraaff, referring to Garth Fowden, terms "the hierarchy of knowledge." He points out that this concept was explicitly emphasized in several key passages of the *Corpus Hermeticum* such as X, 9: "Γνῶσις is the goal of ἐπιστήμη" (Γνῶσις δ' ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμης τὸ τέλος). See Hanegraaff, "Altered States of Knowledge," 133.
[491] *De triplici ratione* V, 15, 18–20, in Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo,* 136, 154–64.
[492] *Ibid*., 140.
[493] Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo*, 92–101.
[494] Obviously, the implied reference here is to Luke 10:18: "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Another possible reference is 2 Peter 2:4.

> I will ascend to the heavens and exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit upon the mountain of the testament on the northern side. I will ascend above the high clouds and be similar to the Highest one.
>
> *In coelum ascendam, super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum, sedebo in monte testamenti in lateribus aquilonis. Ascendam super altitudinem nubium et similis ero Altissimo.*[495]

Curiously enough, this quotation contains two synonymous expressions of a concept crucial for Agrippa's spiritual program—ascension and exaltation—but this time put in the Devil's mouth.[496] He fell from his exalted position because he wanted to be "similar to the Highest one." How is it different from countless statements in the *De occulta philosophia* that attribute divine powers to a pious, exalted magician?[497] It is unimaginable that at the time of writing these lines (in Italy, around 1516) the young Agrippa was unaware of this inherent contradiction. To remind the reader, this is roughly the same period in which the German humanist wrote (and soon lost) his commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans, along with his intense Neoplatonic and Hermetic readings. His dedication to the cause of Biblical humanism was amply testified by his surviving correspondence and other activities from that period.[498] The only way out of this seeming contradiction is to assume that Agrippa made a sharp distinction between enjoying divine powers *in union with* God and in opposition to him. In other words, the problem is not in the powers themselves but in their independent use. As I discuss later in the chapter, this is one of the key elements of Agrippa's understanding of piety.

Back to the account of the fall, the author relates how man followed Satan's bad example: created to obey God's will, which was the source of a perpetual life for him, man was tempted by Satan and decided to go after him, thus himself becoming a transgressor. As a consequence of his

[495] *Ibid*., 94. Translation mine. It is a quotation from Isaiah 14:13-14. Another implied reference is obviously Luke 10:18.
[496] On György E. Szőnyi's term exaltation as a synonym for spiritual/magical ascension or deification see Introduction, 16 n. 12.
[497] For instance, *DOP* III 3 (obtaining the divine knowledge, power, and deifying virtue), *DOP* III 5 (obtaining the divine power), etc.
[498] See Nauert, *Agrippa*, 35–54.

transgression, God expelled him from the "garden of bliss" into the "valley of misery," where he became subject to death.[499]

Agrippa does not say anything else about the circumstances of man's fall but rather concentrates on its consequences. Here, significantly, Hermes Trismegistos comes into play. Along with a handful of references to the Apostle Paul, the author abundantly cites the *Corpus Hermeticum* in his depiction of the sad state of existence in which man found himself upon the fall.[500] In addition to losing his immortality (which Agrippa terms *vita perpetua*, not *aeterna*), the second main consequence is *losing one's divine mind*. It implies the loss of a direct knowledge of God, the loss of his grace, and man's transformation into a brutish nature immersed into all kinds of sensual allurements. The author's vision of such an existence is somber: man's soul is dragged away by impure spirits, who force it to commit all kinds of abominable sins to its own misery.

This first chapter serves Agrippa to set the stage for his discussion on the various ways of reacquiring the lost knowledge of God, which should directly lead to regaining one's pristine unity with the Divine. In other words, Agrippa views the question of epistemology as a critical point in man's salvational drama: γνῶσις is not about theoretical knowledge, but about personal transformation that is supposed to annul the consequences of the fall.

Agrippa refers to this transformative nature of knowledge in the *De occulta philosophia* too, in an already cited passage from Book Three, where he points to obstacles that prevent man from enjoying his inborn divine powers. These are various "passions, vain imaginations, and immoderate affections," but then he adds an important remark: once these obstacles are removed, "the divine

[499] Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo*, 94–96: *Homo autem, creatus … ut divinae obsequeretur voluntati, ex quo … vita perpetua donatus est, petitus est a diabolo infesta tentatione; quem auscultans, similiter divinae voluntatis transgressor effectus est. Quare etiam ipse pulsus ex hoc delitiarum horto in hanc vallem miseriae…* In the most general sense, Agrippa's account is evidently based on Gen. 3:1–8.

[500] Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo*, 97, n. 24–29, 98, n. 30 and 33, 99, n. 35–37. Perrone Compagni traces two unacknowledged references to Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis*: 94, n.12, and 95, n.17.

knowledge and power take place immediately" (*quibus expulsis, subito adest divina cognitio atque potestas*).[501] The knowledge of God is thus directly linked to the divine power, and the attainment of both is described here as taking place "immediately" (*subito*).

It is significant that Agrippa again uses this adverb, which I already discussed in Chapter Three with regard to the magician being exposed to the influence of higher entities.[502] And as I suggested there, this sense of immediacy could indicate a sort of rapture, or a sudden change of consciousness that occurs as a result of ascent. The already cited letter to Aurelius Aquapendente contains an additional indication in this sense: writing about man's transformation through the knowledge of God, Agrippa refers to St. Paul's own experience related in 2 Cor. 12:2–4: "And elsewhere he speaks more clearly of himself: I know a man, whether in the body, or out of the body I cannot tell, God knows, caught up unto the third heaven, etc." (*Et alibi clarius de seipso ait, Scio hominem, in corpore vel extra corpus, nescio (Deus scit) raptum usque ad tertium coelum & quae reliqua sequuntur*.)[503] It is important to note that the *raptus* Paul speaks about in this passage took place as an *individual* event, in contrast to the doctrine of rapture as a collective event, which implies the sudden return of Christ who takes the resurrected and the surviving believers to heaven.[504]

De originali peccato disputabilis opinionis declamatio

In this declamation, as evident from its title, Agrippa deals with the specifics of the original sin and the fall. In contrast to the *De triplici ratione*, where he rather briefly narrates than interprets the fall, the *De originali peccato* is a full-fledged exegetical work in which Agrippa applies the allegorical method of

[501] III 3, *DOP* 408, Tyson 449.
[502] See Chapter Three, 171–73, with references to *DOP* I 66: the magician becomes *suddenly* exposed to the superior entity he invokes and he is *suddenly* filled with the virtues of the celestial body whose influence he seeks to attract. "Immediately" and "suddenly" are common synonyms for *subito*.
[503] *Agrippa Aurelio ab Aqua-pendente*, *Epist*. V, 19 (Lyons, 19 November 1527) in *Opera* II, 879–80.
[504] There are several scriptural passages serving as the basis for the interpretation of rapture as a collective event at the Eschaton, with 1 Thes. 4:17 being among the most important: depicting it as a sudden event, Paul uses the verb ἁρπαγησόμεθα (*rapiemur*, "we shall be caught up"). See Watson E. Mills, ed., *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), 736–37.

exegesis on Genesis 1–3.[505] In a dedicatory letter to Theoderich Wichwael, titular bishop of Cyrene and suffragan bishop of Cologne, he claims that he offers an entirely new perspective and that he is unaware if anyone before him had come to such conclusions; instead, that his opinion is based on his own consideration of the problem.[506] However, Marc van der Poel notes that Agrippa's interpretation bears similarities with "the circle of certain heretics, notably the Cathars,"[507] in addition to being openly based on the *Corpus Hermeticum*. This is clearly seen from the negative role that his interpretation attributes to body and materiality.

At the very beginning, Agrippa makes it clear that his conceptual framework is that of anthropological dualism. Already in the second sentence one finds two familiar expressions—"the inner man" (*homo interior*) and "garment" (*indumentum*). The inner man is defined as the rational soul that puts on a bodily garment. The man whom God created after his image according to Genesis 1:26 is precisely that inner man, i.e. the soul. The "complete man" (*homo integer*) whom God vivified by blowing the breath of life into his nostrils according to Genesis 2:7 is a compound made of the inner man and his corporeal garment, joined together by the celestial spirit.[508] In other words, God's act of "vivifying" pertains *only to the body*, which is vivified by being joined to the already existing divine soul. Completely neglecting the second part of the Gen. 2:7, namely that "man became a living soul" (καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν; *et factus est homo in animam viventem*), Agrippa produces a stunning Neoplatonic exegesis of the Biblical account of creation: the living soul was already there, it was merely tied to a body by the medium of spirit. In Agrippa's words:

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[505] For a meticulous analysis of this work in the general context of the humanist genre of *declamatio* see Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 225–45.

[506] *De originali peccato, disputabilis opinionis declamatio*, in Agrippa, *Opera* II, 550: *aliam novamque et meam opinionem adseram, nescius si quispiam ante me eandem opinatus sit … quatenus illam non aliunde quam proprii ingenii diligentia.*

[507] Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 228.

[508] This is reminiscent of Philo's exegesis of the two accounts of man's creation: based on differences in the accounts, the Alexandrian scholar postulates two *different*—and even mutually opposed—human beings: a "heavenly man" (ὁ οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος), who is an immortal, divine entity, and an "earthly man" (ὁ γήϊνος ἄνθρωπος), a mortal compound of the earthly body and divine spirit (Philonis Alexandrini *De opificio mundi* 134–35; *Legum allegoriarum libri* I 31–32).

> At the beginning of the Book of Creation it was written that God said: *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And God created man in his own image*, by which we understand the inner man, who is a rational soul created in the likeness of the divine trinity and unity. To this inner man, created in such a divinely manner, God bestowed an appropriate garment and a residence, namely the human body, which is in agreement with the following words: *And God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his face the breath of life*, which is a certain virtue by which the intellectual soul and the terrestrial body are joined together and united into a complete man. Man is, therefore, composed of the divine soul, the terrestrial body, and the celestial spirit.
>
> *In principio libri Geneseos scriptum est, dixisse Deum, faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram, et fecit Deus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem suam perfecit illum. Quod de homine interiori dictum putamus, qui est anima rationalis ad divinae trinitatis simul ac unitatis similitudinem create, quo homine interiore sic divinitus constituto idoneum Deus illi largitus est indumentum ac domicilium, corpus scilicet humanum: quod et sequens litera respondit quando dicit: Formavit Deus hominem de limo terrae et inspiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vitae, quae virtus quaedam est qua intellectualis anima et terrenum corpus coniunguntur atque in unum integrum hominem uniuntur. Ex anima itaque divina et corpore terreno spirituque celesti homo constitutus est*.[509]

Apart from the exegetical component, this passage strongly supports my theses presented in Chapter Three: Agrippa clearly distinguishes between "the inner man" and the terrestrial man (whom he also explicitly calls *homo exterior*); the inner man is no different from the divine soul, which Agrippa also terms *mens;*[510] the physical body is seen as the inner man's garment; this ontological dichotomy is reconciled by the middle element—the celestial spirit. This is the overarching frame of Agrippa's exegesis.

Another confirmation of the tripartite structure of soul is found in Agrippa's statement that *ratio* mediates between the pure intellect and the sensible soul, and that it is also *ratio* that "grasps the good and the bad, truth and falsehood."[511] Moreover, the author in the same sentence equates *ratio* with *spiritus* by claiming that the latter "thrives with the power of the soul manifested in the body, which

[509] *De originali peccato*, in *Opera* II, 551. Translation mine. The italicized words are quotes from the Bible.
[510] *Ibid*., 552.
[511] *Ibid*., 552: *...in ipsa ratione ... quae mediat inter purum intellectum et sensibilem animam, utriusque boni et mali, veritatis et erroris capax*. This is an important textual indication that, for Agrippa, *ratio* is the seat of will-power and that, consequently, the main battle for man's salvation takes place there.

mediates between the material body and the immaterial mind."[512]

Having created the "whole man," God placed him in the Garden of Eden, which is located on the Earth, in the middle of the macrocosm. Although described as a garment and thus ontologically inferior to the divine soul, man's vivified body was at first immortal due to its uninterrupted connection to the soul and God himself. Only after the sin of disobedience did it lose its immortality.

Before interpreting the sin, Agrippa expounds his allegorical understanding of the two trees in the Garden of Eden: the tree of life represents the knowledge of God (*cognitio Dei*) and the constant contemplation of God (*eiusque assidua contemplatio*). The fruits of divine knowledge and contemplation are wisdom and chastity (*sapientia et castitas*), which bring forth eternal life (*ex quo vita aeterna*).[513] As shown below, already the direct linking of chastity and eternal life points to the moral and practical implications of Agrippa's exegesis. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents carnal desire (*affectus carnis*) and the knowledge of earthly things (*prudentia terrenorum*).[514] Tasting the fruit of this tree resulted in the fall from the primordial state of bliss.

The creation of woman is related in a far more concise way than that of man: Agrippa simply asserts that "Eve was created from Adam's rib" (*ex costa Adae creata est Eva*).[515] However, as I argue below, this brief remark conceals Agrippa's Neoplatonic understanding of Genesis, according to which Eve (or what she represents) *emanates from Adam*. This is evident from the way Agrippa interprets the three persons involved in the act of primordial fall:

> Adam is faith established in God, the foundation of reason. Therefore, Eve, the free reason, was created from Adam's rib. On the other hand, the serpent is sensuality itself, which crawls on the ground amidst the fallen, feeble, carnal things. Henceforth the

[512] *Ibid*.: *in spiritu … in quo vigent potentiae animae in corpore ogranisatae, quae mediant inter materiale corpus et immaterialem mentem*. For my thesis that *ratio* is closely related to—if not equal with—*spiritus* see Chapter Three, 135–37.
[513] *De originali peccato*, 552.
[514] Note that Agrippa makes a clear terminological distinction between *cognitio* and *prudentia* that mirrors the above-discussed relation between γνῶσις and ἐπιστήμη. By analogy with the two modes of man, they can be said to represent "internal" and "external" knowledge.
[515] *Ibid*.

> serpent tempted Eve—that is, the reason—with the lust for sensual pleasures, and Eve accepted the serpent—that is, the allurements of the senses—and she was thus deceived. Thereafter she deceived the man Adam, rejecting faith, which fell down into the realm of the sensible … and was abandoned by God.
>
> *Adam quidem fides est stabilita in Deo, fundamentum rationis. Ideo ex costa Adae creata est Eva ratio libera. Serpens autem est ipsa sensualitas, quae serpit in terrenis, caducis, infirmis et carnalibus. Hinc itaque serpens, per concupiscientiam sensibilium, tentavit Evam, rationem scilicet, quae acquiescens serpenti, ipsis puta sensuum illecebris, decepta est. Quae deinde … decepit virum Adam, deiiciens fidem, quae delapsa in sensibilia … defecit a Deo*.[516]

This is the core of Agrippa's exegesis of the Biblical creation narrative: Adam stands for *fides,* Eve for *ratio,* and the serpent for *sensualitas*. It is not difficult to recognize in this interpretation a tripartite scheme that corresponds to the *mens–ratio–idolum* model discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis. *Fides* is a divine virtue and hence the main constituent of the divine mind, which is permanently absorbed in the contemplation of God. Eve was created from Adam's rib just as *ratio* proceeds from *mens,* which is for that reason designated as the foundation of *ratio*. *Ratio* is described as *libera* ("free") since this is its main prerogative: as already discussed, it is the seat of willpower and can freely move upwards or downwards. Finally, the *sensualitas* of the serpent corresponds to the earthly and sensual nature of *idolum*, which is tightly linked to the physical body.[517]

The bottom-line of Agrippa's exegesis, then, is the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation and the Hermetic account of the fall. *What falls is the inner man*, i.e. the soul, and the German humanist states this explicitly: "It seemed appropriate that we first explained these things about the tree of life, the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, and *the fall of the inner man* into the mortal senses" (*Haec de ligno vitae, vel de ligno scientiae boni et mali, ac interioris hominis lapsu ita ad mortalem sensum prius*

[516] *Ibid*. Translation mine. Note that the adjective *sensibilis* has two distinct meanings: "sensible" as perceptible by the senses and "sensual" as relating to the gratification of the senses (see LS, 1670, s.vv. *sensibilis* and *sensualitas*). Agrippa has both meanings in mind, with the latter figuring more prominently in his interpretation of the original sin.

[517] It might look like an inconsistency in Agrippa's exegesis that he interprets Adam both as the inner man and faith. If the above-given interpretation is accepted, then there is no inconsistency. Another way around would be to assume that Agrippa develops his exegesis on two levels: anagogical (Adam as the inner man) and allegorical (Adam as faith).

exponere visum est).[518] The body is more of a symptom of the fall than an equal participant in the event. It does not have a separate role in Agrippa's casting and, if there is anything to associate it with, it can only be the serpent, the metaphor for the sensual nature.

This is further supported by Agrippa's vindication of Eve's role, which has been seen by some scholars as another sign of his opposition to "the misogynistic strain in Christian theology."[519] Namely, the original sin and the fall are solely Adam's fault: Eve was not even created at the time when God commanded Adam not to eat from the *lignum scientiae boni et mali* (Gen. 2:16–22); in other words, the order, at least formally, did not apply to her. "Therefore," says Agrippa, "it was not Eve who sinned by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad … nor was she reproached by God … but Adam, who was forbidden to taste it" (*Ideo non peccavit Eva comedendo de ligno scientiae boni et mali … nec corripuit illam Deus, … sed Adae, quem vetitum erat de illo gustare*).[520] Adam was not supposed to put his trust in woman (*credidit mulieri*) and that is why the fall was solely his responsibility.

Although this part of Agrippa's exegesis can be read in the context of the relationship between the sexes (and he indeed uses it as an argument in his *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus*), its allegorical significance is evident: only the immortal *mens*, the agent of *divina cognitio* and *contemplatio*, can be the transgressor of God's will and commandment. *Ratio*, the mind's emanation, suffers the consequences of the transgression but cannot be its cause. It is naturally inferior and posterior to faith (which, as I argue, stands for the immortal mind): *ratio enim posterior est fide et fides natura prior ratione*.[521] This also determines the epistemological capacities of these two components of soul: *mens*, that is *fides*, should be occupied with *cognitio* and *contemplatio* (i.e. γνῶσις), whereas *ratio* in itself and by itself cannot go beyond the level of *scientia* (ἐπιστήμη) and should therefore limit itself

[518] *Ibid*., 554.
[519] Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 235.
[520] *De originali peccato*, 553.
[521] *Ibid*.

to the study of the created things through investigation, argumentation, demonstration etc. It should be oriented towards and subjected to faith, for faith alone is in direct touch with the divine and can restore man to his prelapsarian position. This is the idea that Agrippa fully developed in the *De vanitate.* Moreover, it is in congruence with my thesis that, for Agrippa, spiritual ascension and salvation imply the unity of the immortal mind with its lower emanations.

Commixtio carnis displicet Deo: the problem of sex

The second crucial aspect of Agrippa's exegesis, in addition to his allegorical interpretation of the persons involved in the fall, is his understanding of the exact nature of the original sin. Quite simply put, it consisted in *the act of sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve,* to use the succinct formulation of Van der Poel, who considers this view "indeed unusual" and, based on its implications, alludes to its possible heretic (even Cathar) origin.[522] And indeed, the openness and fierceness of Agrippa's attack on human sexuality are stunning.

"My own opinion," says Agrippa, "is that the original sin was nothing else but the carnal copulation between man and woman" (*ipsa autem opinion nostra talis est non aliud fuisse originale peccatum quam carnalem copulam viri et mulieris*).[523] The serpent does not only stand for sensuality in general, it represents the very carnal desire (*concupiscentia*) and it is no wonder that its shape resembles that of male organ:

> …this serpent I consider to be no other than our disposition toward the senses and the flesh, or rather, the male genital organ of carnal desire, the creeping member, the serpentine member, the lustful member, devious in various ways, which tempted and deceived Eve.
>
> *…hunc serpentem non alium arbitramur, quam sensibilem carnalemque affectum, immo*

[522] Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 227–28. Although I share this general impression with Van der Poel, I have not been able to find any direct links to Cathar thought in Agrippa's works. His dualist attitude and rejection of materiality are amply demonstrated in my thesis, but I believe the influence of the *Corpus Hermeticum* alone can sufficiently account for such views, as I argue below.
[523] *De originali peccato*, 554. Translation mine.

> *ipsum carnalis concupiscentiae genitale viri membrum, membrum reptile, membrum serpens, membrum lubricum, variisque anfractibus tortuosum, quod Evam tentavit atque decepit*.[524]

Prior to the sin of fornication, Adam end Eve, with their immortal bodies, lived in a virginal marriage that was to be consummated by the word and spirit of God (*in Paradiso, nuptiae virginitatis, consummandae in verbo ac spiritu Dei*); after the fall, their marriage was turned into carnal and consummated by "the corruptible coitus" (*extra vero Paradisum, nuptiae carnis, consummatae in coitu corruptibili*).[525] A direct consequence of indulging in the carnal coitus was the loss of immortality. Sex brings along death: "[the original] corruption is coitus and refers to coitus, and the prize for it is death" (*corruptio autem coitus est et ad coitum pertinet, cuius praemium mors*).[526]

Thus, for Agrippa, *concupiscientia* or carnal desire forms the very core of the original sin, and is not merely its consequence, a punishment inflicted on man for Adam's disobedience. Furthermore, Agrippa adheres to the idea that the hereditary nature of the original sin is primarily manifested *through* the act of sexual intercourse: "all those who are born out of the corruptible coitus are corrupted" (*de quo* [sc. *coitu corruptibili*] *omnes qui nati sunt corrumpuntur*).[527] Corruption does not only imply the loss of immortality, but also the loss of all the other divine qualities that the primordial man enjoyed: the fallen man has become like an irrational animal, always looking for food and sex, having lost the spiritual seed of intelligence (*quasi irrationabilia iumenta in ventrem et libidinem proni sunt …*

[524] *Ibid*., 554–55. Quoted in Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 236, with his translation.
[525] *De originali peccato*, 556. On the linguistic level Agrippa makes a careful distinction between the gerundive form *consummandae* ("meant to be consummated") and the perfect participle *consummatae* (simply "consummated"). The former was God's intention and command, the latter the result of man's disobedience.
[526] *Ibid*.
[527] *Ibid*. For a discussion on Agrippa's position within the theological debates about the nature of the original sin see Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 226–29. Concerning the two possible interpretations of Romans 5:12 ("Therefore, as sin came into this world through one man, and death through sin, so death was passed on to all man inasmuch as all sinned"), namely that "the flash contained an evil force directed against God before Original Sin" and that "the flesh received this force as a result of sin" (Van der Poel, *ibid*., 226–27), Agrippa was clearly closer to the first interpretation.

inteligentiae semen spirituale amisit).[528] The exact cause of man's mortality is that the divine light, which once kept his body integral and immortal, has been withdrawn from him due to God's wrath. Or, in Agrippa's words, "God was displeased with the sexual act" (*commixtionem carnis displicuisse Deo*).[529] This is why Agrippa's proposed program of spiritual rebirth and restoration puts so much emphasis on chastity and corporal mortification, as discussed in previous chapters.[530]

The nature's embrace: a Hermetic interpretation of the carnal copulation

Agrippa's interpretation of the original sin and the fall poses several problems. First of all, it differs notably from the account given in the *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* in that there is no mention of Satan and the fall of angels that preceded that of Adam. However, this is understandable if one bears in mind that the German humanist sticks to the specific loci appearing in the Biblical accounts of man's fall, where the fallen angels are simply not mentioned.

More importantly, Agrippa's allegorical exegesis, in the way he delineates it, suggests that he actually departs from the personalized Biblical account of *one* Adam and *one* Eve, the predecessors of humankind. If Adam represents *fides* (or *mens*, if faith is taken to represent the immaterial mind as I suggest), Eve stands for *ratio*, and the serpent for *sensualitas*, in that case Agrippa's allegory can be read as a generalized account of the soul's embodiment: *every* fallen soul passes through the same process of faith shifting away from God towards the sensual realm. If so, it would be in tune with Agrippa's doctrine of ascension delineated in the *De occulta philosophia*, in which he pleads for a *return* to the primordial state of divine knowledge, power, and coexistence with the *Summus Opifex* mentioned in the programmatic first sentence of that work. Followed to its furthest implications, this

[528] *De originali peccato*, 557.
[529] *Ibid.*
[530] It is evident that Agrippa's interpretation carries certain Augustinian traits, such as the overall emphasis on carnal desire in relation to the original sin, or the treatment of *concupiscentia* in a metaphysical, not in a psychological sense; see, for instance, Jesse Couenhoven, "St. Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin," *Augustinian Studies* 36:2 (2005): 359–96, with an overview of pertinent scholarship. However, as I show below, Agrippa parts from Augustine in many ways.

would mean that in the beginning *every man* was Adam; otherwise, what would be the point of a "return" so often mentioned by the Nettesheimer?

Another problem is how to reconcile Agrippa's allegorical interpretation of Adam, Eve, and the serpent with his literal insistence on the sexual intercourse as the original sin. In my opinion, Agrippa's literal interpretation of the nature of the original sin conceals an allegorical one, based on Agrippa's Neoplatonic/Hermetic understanding of man.

As Marc van der Poel points out, Agrippa's exegesis is strongly influenced by the *Corpus Hermeticum*, especially its first discourse, the *Pimander*.[531] I believe this influence is most pronounced in Agrippa's interpretation of sex. The *Pimander* speaks both of man's creation and of his fall. From the highly obscure and enigmatic account of man's creation one comes to a conclusion that the primordial man was a divine entity that fell from its position due to becoming lovers with nature.

As I already discussed in Chapter Three, in the Hermetic narrative of creation man is of the same nature as his creator: God "gave birth to a man like himself" and man "had the father's image."[532] The author of the discourse does not openly say that man was consubstantial with God, but this is strongly implied by the context.[533] In any case, he was immaterial and immortal. In addition, he was gifted with almost the same privileges as his elder brother, the demiurge, but it appears that he was somewhat envious of him: he "wished to break through the circumference of the circles to observe the rule of the one given power over the fire" [i.e. the demiurge].[534] This action resulted in the fall:

[T]he man broke through the vault and stooped to look through the cosmic framework,

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[531] Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 230–31, where he notes that "Agrippa involved the *Pimander* in his reflections on the problem of Original Sin."
[532] *Pimander* 12 in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 3.
[533] This attribute appears in *CH* I,10 in connection to another son of God, the demiurge (Copenhaver translates the word as "craftsman"), who is actually man's elder brother. The demiurge is consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) with the Word of God, which is not different from God himself. The demiurge, who is described as a second mind, creates seven governors, who encompass the sensible world in circles and preside over them. He sets into circular motion the entire cosmic machinery, as a result of which the lower levels of the world are created and populated with living things. (*CH* I, 9–11 in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 3; see also note ad I.13 in *ibid*., 108.)
[534] *Ibid.*

> thus displaying to lower nature the fair form of god. Nature smiled for love when she saw him … who holds in himself all the energy of the governors and the form of god, for in the water she saw the shape of the man's fairest form and upon the earth its shadow. When the man saw in the water the form like himself as it was in nature, *he loved it and wished to inhabit it*; wish and action came in the same moment, and he inhabited the unreasoning form. *Nature took hold of her beloved, hugged him all about and embraced him, for they were lovers*.[535]

Marsilio Ficino's translation, which was available to Agrippa, differs from Copenhaver's in one detail only: according to Ficino, after he broke through the vault, man "displayed [his] nature, which fell from above, as a fair form of god" (*ostenditque naturam, que deorsum labitur, velut pulchram dei formam*).[536] Apart from this, Ficino's rendering of the passage corresponds to Copenhaver's, which means that Agrippa could read how the primeval man "came to love it [i.e. his reflection] and desired to associate with it" (*amavit eam secumque congredi concupivit*). Ficino here uses a verb loaded with theological significance (*concupivit*—the perfect tense of *concupiscere,* from which the noun *concupiscentia* is derived), and the rest of the passage carries an even more pronounced sexual imagery: "Nature also embraced that to which she was driven with all her love, she deeply permeated it and united with it" (*Natura quoque illud, in quod tota ferebatur amore, complexa, illi penitus sese implicuit atque commiscuit*).[537] Ficino's verb *commiscere* renders the Greek original μείγνυμι.[538] Both were commonly used to denote sexual intercourse in Classical Greek and Latin. Several lines below, Agrippa could also read how "nature made love with man" (*natura homini sese immiscens*).[539]

Based on this, it is safe to conclude that the German humanist interprets the original sin largely through the lenses of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Man's fall was a consequence of his *loving embrace with nature*, born out of his curiosity and a tinge of envy towards the superior being (in *CH,* the

[535] *CH* I, 14 in *ibid*., 3. Italics mine.
[536] Campanelli, *Pimander*, 11. Ficino's reading of this locus is also noted in the *apparatus criticus* of Gustav Parthey's Greek edition, *Poemaner* 7, n. 3.4.
[537] Campanelli, *Pimander*, 11–12.
[538] *Poemander*, 7.
[539] *CH* I,16 in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 4; Campanelli, *Pimander*, 12. The Greek original uses a compound of the same verb, with the identical sexual connotation: ἡ γὰρ φύσις ἐπιμιγεῖσα τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ (*Poemander*, 8).

demiurge). Furthermore, his explanation of the repercussions of the fall equally relies on the Hermetic account, as already shown in his *Dialogus de homine*: at that moment, the divine light which held all the elements together and secured man's immortality withdrew from him. "[T]he restraints were loosened and the humors became disharmonious, and at that moment innumerable diseases and sins, the causes of diseases, came into being and man became subject to death as a result of his sin." [540] In the *Dialogus de homine* Agippa also stresses that "man embraced the body" (*corpus amplectens*), but in that work he goes a step further by adding that precisely *through* the act of embracing the body man disobeyed God's command.[541] As Van der Poel suggests, most probably *CH* I,18–19 provided the key reference for this notion: "[D]esire is the cause of death," says Poemandres. "[T]he one who loved the body that came from the error of desire goes on in darkness, errant, suffering sensibly the effects of death."[542]

It should be mentioned, however, that *CH* I,18 also portrays the primeval man as androgynous and that the fall resulted in the separation between the sexes. Van der Poel seems to think that this was also Agrippa's position.[543] In his famous "feminist" treatise *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* Agrippa does allude to God's androgyny echoing the *Asclepius*, 20–21, but neither in the *Dialogus de homine* nor in the *De originali peccato* does he mention the primeval man's androgyny.[544] After all, if the primeval man had been androgynous, the very idea of sexual intercourse would have

[540] Agrippa, *Dialogus de homine*, 55v. The translation is given in Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 231. See also Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 19–20, who also adduces Lodovico Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis* as one of the sources of Agrippa's interpretation of man's fall.

[541] Agrippa, *Dialogus de homine*, 55v. One could thus conclude that this work betrays Agrippa's anti-corporal attitude more openly than the *De originali peccato*, which is, after all, a piece of Biblical exegesis and therefore expected to be more in tune with—or at least less at odds than—the mainstream Christian doctrines.

[542] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 4; see also Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 231.

[543] See, for instance, Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 50, 200, 230.

[544] God's "fecundity of both sexes" is also mentioned by Lazzarelli in the *Crater Hermetis* 25.1, which was most probably Agrippa's main source for this idea in addition to the *Asclepius*: see Hanegraaff, Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*, 70. Hanegraaff, *loc. cit.*, also seems to think that Lazzarelli believed in the primeval man's androgyny. However, from the premise that "[b]eing created in God's image, Man … is likewise 'furnished with the fecundity of both sexes'" does not follow that the primeval man was androgyne. It can simply refer to the coexistence of two separate sexes.

been absurd. On the contrary, it is obvious that Agrippa conveniently omits this detail in his reading of the Hermetic narrative of the fall.

One other aspect in which the German humanist significantly modifies his Hermetic role model is putting the main emphasis on the carnal aspects of sexual intercourse. Although the *Pimander* points to carnality with all its miseries as the main consequence of the fall, it does not treat man's "loving embrace with nature" as an act of carnal copulation. The Hermetic "man" and "nature" can only be construed as different hypostases of the Divine and in that sense their engaging in sexual intercourse is better interpreted as a kind of cosmological ἱερὸς γάμος than as mere carnal sex.[545] As Van der Poel hints, the reasons for Agrippa's over-interpretation of the Hermetic idea of copulation might be hidden in possible Gnostic—and particularly Cathar—influences, but this question surpasses the scope of my thesis. Perhaps it is not even necessary to go too far in searching for such influences: the *Corpus Hermeticum* itself is replete with clear instances of anti-corporeal (or, more precisely, anti-carnal) attitudes.[546]

SPIRITUAL REGENERATION

In his comparative analysis of Agrippa's *Dialogus de homine* and *De originali peccato* on the one side and Lodovico Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis* on the other, Wouter Hanegraaff convincingly argues that the German's understanding of man's fall, of gnosis and spiritual regeneration, and of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in general depend to a considerable extent on his Italian predecessor.[547] To support his thesis, Hanegraaff cites loci from Agrippa's writings that are direct borrowings from Lazzarelli. For

[545] Based on the *Crater Hermetis* 6.2 and 14.3, Wouter Hanegraaff suggests (but does not further develop that thought) that Lazzarelli too could have understood the original sin as sexual intercourse, in which case he was the direct source for Agrippa's interpretation: see Hanegraaff, Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*, 211, n. 100, and 185, n.38.
[546] Especially Discourses I, IV, and VII. See also Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 93–124 for his discussion on possible Manichaean, Mandaean, and other Gnostic influences on the *Corpus Hermeticum*.
[547] Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 5–25.

instance, Agrippa's explanation of man's loss of immortality as a consequence of the withdrawal of the divine light is explicated in the *Crater Hermetis*, 15.2–16.3.[548] The same goes for Lazzarelli's interpretation of the tree of life, which he interprets as "the contemplation and knowledge of things divine,"[549] although the two Christian Hermetists diverge in their understanding of the tree of good and evil: whereas for Lazzarelli it means focusing on created things in the most general way, it is a far more specific metaphor for Agrippa, as I discussed above.

Lazzarelli and Agrippa are different kinds of thinkers and writers in several respects. Unlike the Italian, Agrippa does not display clear elements of messianism in his ideas. On the contrary, temporality plays a minor role in his thought. Furthermore, the elements of Neoplatonic teachings, such as emanation and the dichotomy of body and soul, are much more pronounced in Agrippa. Finally, the German's works are conceived as theoretical treatises, whereas Lazzarelli presents himself in the *Crater Hermetis* as divinely inspired and fashions his work after the literary role model of the *Corpus Hermetis*: through the very act of dialogue he initiates his interlocutors into the mysteries of his own personal revelation.[550] However, it is beyond doubt that Agrippa's reading of the *Hermetica* was considerably influenced by Lazzarelli, and this is best seen in their notions of spiritual rebirth or regeneration.[551]

Two kinds of generation. Spiritual rebirth

In his examination of the *Dialogus de homine* and *De originali peccato* Wouter Hanegraaff makes the following observation: "The implication [of Agrippa's conviction that original sin consisted of the

[548] Hanegraaff, Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*, 213–17. See also Hanegraaff's discussion, *ibid*., 67.
[549] *Ibid*., 64.
[550] *Ibid*., 61–62: "[T]he 'enormous being' Poemandres, who had once appeared to Hermes in a vision, had in fact been no one less than Christ himself, later known in his incarnate form as Jesus. In a similar manner Poimandres-Christ has now taken up residence in Lazzarelli, and has illuminated his mind. (…) Having been illuminated in the same manner as Hermes himself, Lazzarelli now claims equal spiritual authority, as a master who can initiate others in turn." This high posture is entirely absent in Agrippa.
[551] In all likelihood, Agrippa came across Lazzarelli's work during his stay in Paris, where he could read the 1505 edition of the *Crater Hermetis* published by Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples.

sexual act] is that Agrippa systematically juxtaposed two kinds of 'generation': a carnal one leading to death, and a spiritual one leading to immortality."[552] Indeed, in opposition to *generatio imperfecta* or *generatio mortis* the German humanist emphasizes the notion of *mysterium regenerationis*.[553] He expresses it in the most Christian terms:

> Therefore, God the Lord and Father … sent to us his only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for our sins. … For surely, he has recovered us from the fall and gave us back the perpetual life through the mystery of regeneration, which has been lying hidden in mankind all along.
>
> *Hinc dominus deus pater … misit nobis unigenitum filium suum, dominum nostrum hiesum christum, qui passus est, mortuus est pro peccatis nostris. … Ipse namque reparavit lapsum, retulitque vitam perpetuam per regenerationis misterium, quod in illum usque humanum genus latuit*.[554]

However, as I already pointed out in my analysis of the *Dialogus de homine*,[555] Agrippa's understanding of Christ's redemptive role is hardly in line with the mainstream theological doctrines. To remind the reader, he interprets Christ's cross as "this material body, which we wear as a sort of cross. We should *get rid of it* and *leave it*, so that we could return to the pristine immortality together with Christ."[556] When read in relation to the *De originali peccato* (especially as these two works are separated by only two or three years and make a distinct group in the German's opus), it leaves no room for doubt that Agrippa's notion of spiritual ascension and salvation implies the abandonment of the material body. This is clearly his position in the *Dialogus de homine*, whereas in the *De originali peccato* he does not openly advocate this idea but exhibits strong animosity towards carnality.

Yet, whether it implies the abandonment of body or not—a question I discuss below—it is

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[552] Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 20. This notion, of course, goes back to Plato's *Symposium*, 180, where he differentiates between the heavenly (*urania*) and earthly (*pandemos*) Aphrodite.
[553] Agrippa, *Dialogus de homine*, 56r–56v. This idea also first appears in the *Crater Hermetis* (14.3), where Lazzarelli distinguishes between material and spiritual procreation: see Hanegraaff, Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*, 209–11.
[554] *Ibid*., 56r. Translation mine.
[555] Chapter Three, 118–21.
[556] Agrippa, *Dialogus de homine*, 57v: *quo crux nil aliud est quam corpus hoc materiale, quod in similitudine crucis geritur. Hoc nos abnegare et relinquere oportet, ut cum christo ad pristina mortalitatem revertamur.* Translation mine.

evident that the terms ascension and spiritual regeneration in Agrippa and Lazzarelli reflect their idea of salvation and that they are based on the notion of γνῶσις as a direct, revelatory knowledge of the self and God. In the broadest sense of that phrase, spiritual regeneration implies a reversal of the primordial fall. Lazzarelli views it as a process of *mystical contemplation* that ushers in personal revelation and the state of ecstasy and love in which the individual comes to know God and oneself.[557] According to Hanegraaff, this process has very little to do with magic taken in whichever of its definitions, just as the *Corpus Hermeticum* itself hardly deals with magic at all.[558] Likewise, in the opening chapters of the third book of *De occulta philosophia* the contemplation of God plays a key role in the magician's preparations for the ascent.[559] Following his Italian predecessor, Agrippa too views spiritual ascension as a process based on individual revelation taking place *during one's lifetime*, not upon death, as it happened to Hermes, who was enlightened by merely listening to Poimandres. This amounts to what Ioan Petru Culianu terms cathartic ascension as opposed to eschatological ascension;[560] the latter concept is represented in the Christian doctrine of the Last Judgment, when Christ comes in his glory and the truth of each man's relationship with God is manifested.

One remarkable aspect of spiritual regeneration as understood by Lazzarelli is the regenerated man's power *to create living souls*. Above all other powers that he comes to share with God is fertility, God's life-giving power.[561] The inborn fertility of man's divine mind enables him to give birth to a "divine offspring" (*divinam sobolem*), that is, to procreate spiritually and generate new divine

[557] Hanegraaff, Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*, 67–71. For a detailed analysis of the Hermetic concept of personal revelation and regeneration, which shaped Lazzarelli's and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Agrippa's understanding of it, see Hanegraaff, "Altered States of Knowledge," 133–58.
[558] Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 1–5. Speaking of Lazzarelli's and Agrippa's use of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, he remarks: "We are not dealing here with the straightforward case of a magical text…, but rather with an innovative interpretation of a nonmagical text, resulting in a new perspective on how the attainment of a superior gnosis implies the acquisition of superhuman powers" (*ibid*., 2). Concerning Agrippa's *application* of the ancient text, I beg to disagree: as I discussed at legth in Chapter Four, Agrippa's approach *is* decisively magical.
[559] See III, 1–7, *DOP* 402–18, Tyson 441–58. See also my discussion at the end of Chapter Four.
[560] See Culianu, *Psychanodia I*, 10–15.
[561] Hanegraaff, Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*, 68–75.

beings.[562] This is Lazzarelli's interpretation and further development of the well-known "god-making" passage in the *Asclepius*, 23–24 and 37–38, in which Hermes describes to Asclepius the ancient Egyptian practice by which the priests drew down the cosmic powers into their temple statues and thus enlivened them.[563] Agrippa accepts this interpretation, as evident from the fact that in *DOP* III 36 he quotes from the *Crater Hermetis* 27.1 (and openly refers to Lazzarelli, which he rarely does with his contemporaries).[564] Speaking of man's ability to "bring forth gods," Agrippa regards it as the supreme mystery revealed by Jesus Christ himself.

It is worth noting that Vittoria Perrone Compagni and Wouter Hanegraaff interpret the magical power of the regenerated man in Agrippa's perspective as a *result* of man's assimilation into God, not as the *instrument* for attaining it.[565] On this basis Perrone Compagni criticizes Christopher Lehrich for apparently claiming the opposite: "in essence," says Lehrich, "the claim is that divine frenzy and ecstasy *are produced by the very techniques*—elevated to their highest forms, to be sure—of demonic magic!"[566] Since this question pertains to the very nature of magical power, it merits some consideration.

According to Perrone Compagni, magical power comes as a ripe fruit in the process of deification, that is, as an indicator or "proof" that the magus has achieved the state of union with God. Hanegraaff's agreement with her view is based on his analysis of the "soul-making" passages in Lazzarelli and Agrippa. On the other hand, Lehrich's conclusion is based on his analysis of the way Agrippa treats the "four divine frenzies"—the altered states of consciousness achieved through the rites of ceremonial magic. These frenzies are hierarchically organized and thus gradually provide the

[562] *Crater Hermetis*, 21.4, in Hanegraaff, Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*, 130–31.
[563] *Ibid*., 72–75.
[564] *DOP* 513, Tyson 582. See also Hanegraaff, "Better Than Magic," 9–14, for a detailed comparative analysis of Agrippa's and Lazzarelli's texts.
[565] Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo*, 20 n. 38: "il potere magico, insomma, è la conseguenza dell' assimilazione a Dio, non il suo strumento." Hanegraaff concurs with her in "Better Than Magic," 13–14.
[566] Lehrich, *The Language of Demons and Angels*, 195. Italics mine.

magician with the power of prophesying and, ultimately, divine knowledge.[567]

My own position is that there is room for both interpretations and that they are not mutually exclusive. The problem lies in the precise qualification of "magical power." Hanegraaff is aware of this and adds that "it should be specified that the power of the regenerated man is actually the divine power of creation, *not* magical power as commonly understood."[568] In that case, however, one operates with a concept of magical power that is significantly narrowed down. Based on my own reading of Agrippa, I suggest that there is a whole range of phenomena that can be labeled as "magical powers" and that one's assessment of these phenomena depends on precisely what level or form of magical power one takes into consideration.

It is a fact that Agrippa views the highest forms of miracle-working (such as soul-making) as indicators of one's deified position. This is how in *DOP* III 6 he explains the miracles of the Biblical prophets and apostles: "So the prophets, apostles, and the rest, were famous by the wonderful power of God" (*sic prophetae, sic Apostoli, sic caeteri viri Dei maximis claruere potentiis*).[569] Moreover, this is the benchmark against which he measures the degree of corruption of the Church leaders in his time: if they are unable to perform miraculous works like the prophets and the apostles, it means they no longer possess the pure and spiritual knowledge of the Revelation.[570]

There is a remarkable parallel in this regard, which is all the more worth mentioning since it resembles the soul-making miracle discussed by Lazzarelli and Agrippa. It is the notion of soul-making in the Jewish idea of the golem as interpreted by Gershom Scholem. In brief, Scholem suggests that golem-making was used as a test for proving one's already achieved closeness to God: "To the

[567] *Ibid.*, 193–96. Agrippa actually adopts this concept from Marsilio Ficino, who, of course, takes it over from Plato and delineates it in his *argumentum* to the Latin translation of *Ion*. Lehrich notes that "it is not explicit that the lower degrees or kinds of frenzy are prerequisites for the higher," but Ficino himself makes this hierarchical structure explicit: see Putnik, *Plato Ficinianus*, 176–80.
[568] "Better Than Magic," 14.
[569] *DOP* 455, Tyson 414.
[570] *De triplici ratione* VI, 16. See also Nauert, *Agrippa*, 207, and Putnik, *The Pious Impiety*, 35–36.

Hasidim the creation of a golem *confirmed man in his likeness to God*."[571] In other words, to be able to draw life down into a clay form, a rabbi was already supposed to be deified. The successful creation of a golem simply confirmed the rabbi's exalted status. This parallel bears evident similarities with Perrone Compagni's and Hanegraaff's thesis that the "true" magical power comes *after* deification. However, Scholem views the practice of golem-making as eminently magical: "The Hasidim seem to have regarded the magic…as a natural faculty with which man within certain limits is endowed. (…) Thus magical knowledge is not a perversion, but a pure and sacred knowledge which belongs to man as God's image."[572] In this sense, Scholem's understanding of the soul-making practice as magical approaches Lehrich's position, *contra* Perrone Compagni and Hanegraaff, who appear to downplay to role of magical rituals in the process of deification.

It is clear from Agrippa's overall discussion of magic in the *De occulta philosophia* that he speaks of a variety of practices, techniques, and powers. I examined some of them in Chapter Four.[573] And although many of these practices and powers do not qualify as theurgy in the Reuchlinian sense of that word, at least some of them are meant as exercises—a sort of *praeparatio theurgica*—for the magician in his gradual ascent. I already argued that gradualness or successiveness was an important principle in the *De occulta philosophia*: the magician is *supposed* to rise through all the three levels of magic.[574] And, no doubt, he moves towards his ultimate goal *by means of magic*, at least in Agrippa's, if not Lazzarelli's, perspective. On his ascending path, he employs various magical operations that

[571] Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, tr. Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 181. Italics mine. The whole discussion is on pp. 158–204.
[572] *Ibid*., 174.
[573] See p. 161–69. An example could be the evil eye used by witches. Agrippa undoubtedly views it as a magical power too, although vastly different from the powers conferred upon the magician through theurgical rites. There are many other types of powers mentioned in the *De occulta philosophia*: curing or inflicting diseases, foretelling the future, subjugating the incorporeal entities to the magician's will, and so on.
[574] E.g. *DOP* I, 2: magic embraces, unites, and actuates physics (i. e. natural philosophy), mathematics, and theology. *DOP* II, 1: the magician must rely on mathematics, otherwise he operates in vain. *DOP* III, 1: religion is a necessary ingreditent of magic. If Agrippa had not been guided by the principles of unity and gradualness, he would have probably never written Books One and Two.

result in various powers. In this sense Lehrich is right in claiming that the Agrippan magus achieves the altered states of consciousness *through* various techniques. It is not in contradiction to my opinion that, for Agrippa, religious magic or theurgy is the core of all magic; it simply means that, despite his hierarchical scheme and personal preferences, he does not downgrade or discard the lower types of magic.

A crucial argument for this claim is Agrippa's important warning against operating *only* through religion before one has reached the level of pure intellect:

> [N]o man can work by pure religion alone, unless he is made entirely intellectual; but whoever, without the mixture of other powers, works by religion alone, if he perseveres long in the work, is swallowed up by the divine power and cannot live long.
>
> *[N]emo potest operari per puram et solam religionem, nisi qui totus factus est intellectualis. Quicunque autem sine admixtione aliarum virtutum per solam religionem operatur, si diu perseveraverit in opera, absorbetur a numine nec diu poterit vivere*.[575]

This is indeed a strong statement, put forth in a straightforward way not so usual for Agrippa. In my opinion, it acquires its full meaning in the conceptual framework of Agrippa's anthropology as delineated in my work. Hence, to be made "entirely intellectual" means to reach the unification of *mens*, *ratio,* and *idolum*, that is, to achieve deification. Agrippa is clearly skeptical about the average magician's ability to reach that level in a foreseeable future and thus he recommends using "the mixture of other powers," which means nothing else but combining theurgy with the lower forms of magic. In other words, according to Agrippa, only the "entirely intellectual," deified magician can perform miracles such as creating souls. All the others must be content with practicing various mixed types of magic until they have reached spiritual rebirth.

The Christian ingredient

In addition to relying on the *Hermetica* and Lodovico Lazzarelli, Agrippa bases his view on spiritual

[575] III, 6, *DOP* 414–15, Tyson 455.

regeneration on the Christian doctrine of spiritual rebirth as delineated in the Gospels. As Michael Keefer points out, the Hermetic-Christian doctrine of spiritual rebirth is a nodal point in Agrippa's thought.[576] It is evidently important to him to connect the two doctrines in order to lend an air of scriptural authority to his heterodox convictions. Thus in the *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum*, in a passage strongly marked by his anti-carnal attitude,[577] Agrippa refers to the expression "to be born again from God" found in John 3:3: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The same phrase appears in John 3:7: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." This is in reply to Nicodemus the Pharisee, who wonders how can a man enter his mother's womb and be born again. Jesus explains that being born again means being born of the Spirit. One finds a similar expression in 1 Peter 1:23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

However, Agrippa's comment on the Johannine reference reveals a profoundly Hermetic and Neoplatonic understanding of this concept:

> Therefore, John says that such a soul is "born again from God," inasmuch as the light of the supreme God—just like the ray of the Sun, which diminishes its body and turns into a fiery nature—flows down through angelic minds all the way to our soul and daily stimulates the soul immersed in the body to *strip off all her carnality, leave all her animal and rational potencies and functions* and, *living solely by the mind*, adorned with hope, directed by faith, burning with love, wholly turned towards God … become a son of God.
>
> *Ideo huiusmodi animam Ioannes ait "nasci iterum ex Deo", siquidem Dei summi lumen—quemadmodum radius solis, corpus attenuans et in igneam convertens naturam—per mentes angelicas usque ad animam nostram defluens, instigat quotidie animam carni immersam, ut denudata ab omni carnalitate deponat omnes potentias operationesque animales et rationales, ac sola mente vivens, spe decora, fide directa, amore flagrans, tota ad Deum conversa…fiat Dei filius*.[578]

[576] Keefer, "Agrippa's Dilemma," 620.
[577] *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* V,16 in Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo*, 144.
[578] *Ibid.*, 144. Translation and italics in the translation mine.

Here, like in numerous other instances discussed so far, one finds an explicit reference to the Hermetic "stripping off the tunic of one's body." Moreover, the idea of the soul leaving the animal and rational potencies and continuing to live solely by the mind clearly reveals the basic Neoplatonic tenet of Agrippa's anthropology examined in my work: the lower levels of the soul are supposed to move upwards and unite with *mens*, the "true soul." It is thus crucial to note that Agrippa defines the *Christian* concept of spiritual rebirth by referring to the Hermetic notion of disembodiment and the Neoplatonic notion of obtaining the divine mind.

The way Agrippa interprets John's words is remarkable. He flatly ignores the common Christian understanding of spiritual rebirth as the beginning of a new life, formally marked by Holy Communion, but essentially achieved through μετάνοια, an inner spiritual conversion or transformation.[579] To be born again is to begin anew in Christ; it implies developing an entirely new nature.[580] A classical reference is Colossians 3:9–10: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."[581] The same idea is conveyed in Romans 12:2: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."[582] In other words, the common doctrinal understanding of spiritual rebirth implies an immersion in *imitatio Christi* so strong that it ultimately changes one's inner nature.

[579] On the concept of μετάνοια see Edward J Anton, *Repentance: A Cosmic Shift of Mind and Heart* (Waltham, MA: Discipleship Publications, 2005); Mark J. Boda and Gordon T. Smith, eds., *Repentance in Christian Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Michael Glazier, 2006). The Latin Fathers translated it as *paenitentia*, thus narrowing down the meaning of the Greek term.

[580] It is interesting to note that the adverb *denuo* (again) in John 3:3 and 3:7 corresponds to ἄνοθεν in the Greek original, which has a double meaning in Latin: *denuo* ("again") and *desuper* ("from above"). Therefore, a Christian is both born again and born from above. The Vulgate translation—and, consequently, Agrippa himself—put entire emphasis on the *denuo*-aspect of the Greek word.

[581] The Greek and Latin words rendered here as "knowledge" are ἐπίγνωσις and *agnitio*.

[582] It is interesting to note that the words "the renewing of your *mind*," appearing in various English versions, render the Vulgate phrase *novitate sensus vestri*, thus conveying an understanding of the basic anthropological terms which is evidently different from Agrippa's.

Γνῶσις and power

Agrippa takes up the Christian concept of rebirth and modifies it by adding the above-discussed Hermetic notion of the sudden and individual attainment of γνῶσις as further developed by Lodovico Lazzarelli. However, regarding Agrippa's and Lazzarelli's understanding of what exactly this kind of rebirth implies, one realizes that the border is rather thin: it is evident that various forms of Christian mysticism based on the idea of μετάνοια—which can be regarded as a Christian variant of cathartic ascension—imply similar elements. A Christian mystic has revelatory visions, states of rapture, and various other extraordinary experiences. Among numerous cases, it will suffice to mention the examples of Hildegard of Bingen or Mechthild of Magdeburg with their visions of the divine.

However, what clearly differentiates Agrippa's understanding of spiritual rebirth from the Christian one is insistence on a *conscious effort* on the magician's part, as well as an emphasis on attaining *divine powers*. Commonly, mystical revelations in Christianity take place as spontaneous occurrences, they are not sought for, and they certainly do not center on the premeditated idea of gaining supernatural powers. On the other hand, Agrippa openly weds γνῶσις with power by claiming that both are obtained simultaneously (and suddenly) in the process of ascension.[583] One will remember his bold and extraordinary attribution of the epithet "supercelestial Bacchus" to Christ,[584] an epithet that he chose on account of Dionysus being twice born. It is important to note that in that same passage, where he designates God as "the author of regeneration," Agrippa gives an indicative description of those who have undergone spiritual rebirth: such persons far excel all the others (*homines caeteros praecellit*), and it is clear from the context that their excellence consists of divine knowledge *and* power.

[583] III 3, *DOP* 408, Tyson 449: "[T]he divine knowledge and power take place immediately" (*subito adest divina cognitio atque potestas*). On the significance of the adverb *subito* ("immediately," "suddenly") as a possible indicator for a sudden change of consciousness linked to the attainment of γνῶσις see Chapter Four, 171–73.
[584] III 1, *DOP* 403, Tyson 441; see Chapter Four, 176–78.

In the *De occulta philosophia* III, 36 Agrippa presents self-knowledge, divine powers, and personal transformation as tightly connected and interdependent:

> And Geber in his *Sum of Alchemy* teaches that no man can come to the perfection of this art if he does not come to know its principles in himself. The more one knows himself, the greater power of attracting he obtains and performs greater and more wonderful things, and ascends to such a great perfection that he is made the son of God and transformed into that image which is God, and is united with him.
>
> *Et Geber in* Summa Alchymiae *docet neminem ad eius artis perfectionem pervenire posse, qui illius principia in seipso non cognoverit: quanto autem magis quisque seipsum cognoscet, tanto maiorem vim attrahendi consequitur tantoque maiora et mirabiliora operatur ad tantamque ascendat perfectionem quod efficitur filius Dei transformaturque in eandem imaginem quae est Deus et cum ipso unitur*.[585]

As I discussed above, the idea that ascension to God is naturally accompanied by the rise of powers leads Agrippa to establish a stunning criterion for assessing the level of one's spiritual development: since for an illuminated man it is natural to perform "wonderful things," this is how the miracles of the prophets and the apostles should be explained. I discuss such a highly unorthodox understanding of piety in the second part of this chapter, below.

Again: what about the body?

It remains to be examined how Agrippa's concept of spiritual rebirth or regeneration relates to the physical body. I already discussed this problem at some length, but the final conclusion still remains elusive. On the one hand, it appears that Agrippa, as demonstrated in a number of passages quoted above, flatly rejects the significance and role of body in the process of ascension or regeneration. On the other, his attitude in some instances does not seem to be unequivocally anti-corporeal. The reader will remember that in the *Dialogus de homine* Agrippa claims that *man as a whole*, and not his soul, is the image of God.[586] In that dialogue he also defines man as a unity of rational soul and body, in the

[585] *DOP* 509, Tyson 580. Geber: the Latinized name of Abu Mūsā Jābir ibn Hayyān (fl. c. 721 – c. 815), an Arabic polymath and writer.
[586] Agrippa, *Dialogus de homine*, 49v. See Chapter Three, 118–21.

same way as Christ is God and man in one. The physical body participates in similitude with God, which is attested by the incarnation of Christ. Furthermore, in his discussion in the *De occulta philosophia* on the post mortem fate of *ratio* Agrippa makes a puzzling remark about it being doomed to disappear "unless it be restored in the circuit of its *new body*" (*nisi in novi corporis circuitu restauretur*).[587]

Finally, both in the *Dialogus de homine* and the *De originali peccato* Agrippa mentions the first man's *immaterial body*, which was corrupted by sin and hence lost its immortality previously maintained by the divine light.[588] In other words, there are indications that Agrippa comprehends the complexity of the problem of corporeality by attempting to discern, albeit vaguely and inconsistently, between *corpus* and *caro* (that is, σῶμα and σάρξ). What he undoubtedly rejects is *caro*, the flesh, which he—quite traditionally—sees as the source of material bondage. But what about *corpus*?

In *DOP* III 36, which discusses the creation of man in the image of God, one comes across an enigmatic statement. Having explained that the purpose of ascension is achieving a mystical union with God, Agrippa adds:

> When man is united with God, all things which are in man are united, especially his mind, then his spirits and animal powers, and vegetative faculty, and the elements including even the matter, *drawing with itself even the body in which form it existed*, leading it forth into a better condition and a heavenly nature, even until *it be glorified into immortality*. And this, as we have already said, is a gift peculiar to man.
>
> *Homine autem Deo unito, uniuntur omnia quae in homine sunt, mens inprimis, deinde spiritus et animales vires vegetandique vis et elementa usque ad materiam, trahens secum etiam corpus, cuius forma extitit, deducens illud in meliorem sortem et coelestem naturam, quousque glorificetur in immortalitatem: et hoc (quod iam diximus) est peculiare hominis donum*.[589]

In other words, the process of obtaining the divine mind—by which the lower parts of soul are united with *mens*—is an integral part of a broader process: that of man's uniting with God. The German

[587] III 44, *DOP* 542, Tyson 613. See Chapter Three, 140.
[588] Agrippa, *De originali peccato*, in *Opera* II, 556; *Dialogus de homine*, 50v–51r.
[589] III 36, *DOP* 509, Tyson 580. Italics in the translation mine.

humanist here views it as gradual spiritualization whereby that which is closest in essence to God (*mens*) is united first, being followed by *ratio* (termed *spiritus* in this passage) and *idolum* (*animales vires vegetandique vis*). What strikes the eye is that the process includes the body itself: it can be uplifted, spiritualized and immortalized. It reads almost as a kind of reverse emanation.

Could this statement be an indication that Agrippa does not fully reject the Christian doctrine of the bodily resurrection? Could he have in mind a spiritualization of the physical body that would result in something equivalent to St. Paul's σῶμα πνευματικόν, a spiritual body received at the resurrection?[590] In the biographical section of this work I mention that the young Agrippa studied the Epistles of St. Paul with John Colet in London. Moreover, during his stay in Italy, along with lecturing on the *Pimander* and writing the *De triplici ratione cognoscendi Deum* and *Dialogus de homine*, Agrippa authored a commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which was eventually lost.[591] One could only speculate as to why he decided to comment on that particular epistle. Having become absorbed in topics such as sin and carnality—as evident by his surviving writings from that time—he could have found some statements of particular interest in Romans 8:1–13.[592] Moreover, this epistle conveys a more negative attitude toward the body: while in Paul's previous epistles it was mainly viewed as ethically neutral, in the Romans he sees it as determined by sin, calls it "the body of sin" (*corpus peccati,* 6:6) and "the body of death" (*corpus mortis,* 7:24).[593]

Refraining from further speculation on Agrippa's possible motives for choosing that particular

[590] 1 Cor 15:44.
[591] It was lost once, then found, and finally lost again: see Chapter One, 39, and n. 72. Agrippa quotes Paul quite frequently in the *De occulta philosophia* too: Perrone Compagni, *DOP* 640, s.v. Paulus apostolus, has identified more than twenty such instances. On Agrippa's use of quotes from Paul see my paper "To Be Born (Again) from God," 150–53.
[592] "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (…) For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. (…) For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" etc.
[593] See also Joachim Gnilka, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder Freiburg im Breisgau, 1994), 36. Gnilka notes that in the Romans the use of the word "body" tends to overlap with that of "flesh."

epistle, I can add that the above-quoted statements on the spiritualization of body and a "new body" stand conspicuously alone in the *De occulta philosophia*, with hardly any other statement to compare to. He does occasionally mention the Last Judgment and the resurrection of the dead (especially in *DOP* III 41), but he does so in the context of examining other writers' affirmative opinions (mainly the early Church Fathers) and it is almost impossible to extract his own opinion on the subject simply by relying on his overview.[594]

St. Paul's teachings about the new man and the spiritual body in all likelihood influenced Agrippa's own understanding of these issues. Yet, this influence did not come in the form of Agrippa's full acceptance of the apostle's teachings, but rather as a precious scriptural confirmation for his own eclectic ideas. This becomes evident if one closely examines Paul's notions on corporeality, death, and redemption.

Paul's notions of the "old man" and the "new man" play a key role in the context of spiritual rebirth. In Colossians 3:9–11 he says: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all."[595] Another well-known passage is Ephesians 4:22–24: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man,

[594] Having mentioned the opinions of Irenaeus of Lyon, Lactantius Firmianus, Ambrose and others, he opts to remain inconclusive: "Seeing that all these things are of an incomprehensible obscurity … I affirm that it is better to doubt concerning occult things than to contend about uncertain things. (…) How [these things] are to be understood, it is hardly found out by the modest searcher, but never by the contentious one" (Tyson, 600).

[595] *Nolite mentiri invicem expoliantes vos veterem hominem cum actibus eius et induentes novum eum qui renovatur in agnitionem secundum imaginem eius qui creavit eum ubi non est gentilis et Iudaeus circumcisio et praeputium barbarus et Scytha servus et liber sed omnia in omnibus Christus*.

which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."[596]

Clearly, being renewed in the spirit of one's mind and putting on the new man that apparently abolishes one's terrestrial identity (Greek, Jew, barbarian, slave, etc.) resemble some of Agrippa's main ideas discussed throughout this work. This is even more so with Paul's famous mention of the σῶμα πνευματικόν (*corpus spiritale*) in 1 Corinthians 15:44: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."[597] A few lines below Paul explicitly states that flesh cannot take part in the mystery of the resurrection: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."[598]

However, Paul's anthropology—despite its complexity and chronological diversity—differs radically from Agrippa's predominantly dualist notion of man. The apostle does employ the Greek anthropological terms, but he remains rooted in the Biblical-Semitic anthropology which views man as an inseparable unity of body and soul and consequently regards the body in positive terms.[599] The body has its own eschatological future by being included in the process of the resurrection. Paul confronts certain Gnostic elements within the Corinthian community (2 Cor. 5:1–10) precisely by reverting Agrippa's Hermetic notion of "undressing the garment of the body"[600] and implicitly calling the incorporeal man "naked" (*nudus,* γυμνός, 2 Cor. 5:3).[601]

Paul does reject flesh: flesh and blood (*caro et sanguis*, σάρξ καὶ αἷμα) cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Man in the fallen state cannot enter the eternal life before being transformed as a

[596] *Deponere vos secundum pristinam conversationem veterem hominem qui corrumpitur secundum desideria erroris, renovamini autem spiritu mentis vestrae, et induite novum hominem qui secundum Deum creatus est in iustitia et sanctitate veritatis*. Paul also contrasts *homo vetus* and *homo novus* in Romans 6:6 and Ephesians 2:15.
[597] *Seminatur corpus animale surgit corpus spiritale si est corpus animale est et spiritale sic.*
[598] 1 Cor 15:50. *Hoc autem dico fratres quoniam caro et sanguis regnum Dei possidere non possunt neque corruptio incorruptelam possidebit*.
[599] Gnilka, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments,* 33–38.
[600] See Chapter Three, 113–18, 125–26.
[601] On skepticism in the Corinthian community regarding the resurrection of the dead see also Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 108–117.

result of the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection.[602] However, this transformation is collective, it occurs in the eschaton, and is entirely God's doing, without man's individual attempts to achieve ascension. A transformed and resurrected body thus becomes spiritual in the sense that it is cleansed not only of its carnality, but also of its *earthly soul*, which is evident from the way Paul contrasts σῶμα πνευματικόν (*corpus spiritale*) and σῶμα ψυχικόν (*corpus animale*).[603] In 1 Cor. 15:45–46 he says: "And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening [= animating] spirit. Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."[604] The Greek terms used are ψυχὴ ζῶσα ("the living soul," pertaining to the first Adam) and πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν ("the life-giving spirit," pertaining to the last Adam, i.e. Christ).

The antithesis between these two concepts is closely linked to the antithesis between the old and the new man: the old man was created and vivified by God's blowing the breath of life into his nostrils (Gen. 2:7). In that sense, the old, "natural" man came *first* and he was simply alive by virtue of carrying the living soul (ψυχὴ ζῶσα). The resurrected man, the new man, is to come later and share with Christ his life-giving spirit (πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν): "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."

This leads to one of the crucial differences between Agrippa's (i.e. Hermetic/Neoplatonic) and St. Paul's (i.e. orthodox Christian) understanding of spiritual rebirth: according to his own statements, Paul does not see it as a *restoration* of the primordial perfection, but as an eschatological *development* from the old to the new man exemplified in two Adams.[605] In 1 Cor 15:45, referring to Gen. 2:7, he

[602] Lorenzo Scornaienchi, *Sarx und Soma bei Paulus. Der Mensch zwischen Destruktivität und Konstruktivität* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 231–79.
[603] *Ibid*., 239–40.
[604] The KJB inadequately translates the Greek ψυχικόν as "natural" instead of "psychic." The Vulgate *animale* conveys better the original meaning implied here (ψυχή = life in general; see LSJ, 2026).
[605] Scornaienchi, *Sarx und Soma bei Paulus*, 239–40.

calls the created man "the first Adam" (ὁ πρῶτος Ἀδάμ) and the heavenly man "the last Adam" (ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ), a term he explicates two lines below by using the phrase "the second man" (δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος). This second man, the last Adam, whose archetype is Christ, is presented in stark opposition to the first man, who is "of the earth." In other words, the first man is not that perfect εἰκών whose restoration is desired and sought for. There is no *return* to the prelapsarian perfection for, in Paul's eyes, it was not perfection at all compared to the εἰκών established by Christ, the last Adam. The perfect man is to be expected at the end of history, in *Parousia*. Paul's history of salvation can thus be visualized as linear, in opposition to the cyclic—or ahistorical and atemporal—regeneration and restoration of the Neoplatonic and Hermetic paradigms.[606]

To sum up, Agrippa's attempts to differentiate between body and flesh are at best tangent to the anthropology of the New Testament as delineated in the above-quoted statements of the apostle Paul.[607] These two approaches differ in some crucial aspects such as the understanding of the direction of salvation (return vs. progress), its temporal dimension (individual vs. collective/eschatological rebirth), and the nature of the primordial man (spiritual vs. earthly). Within the scope of his writings examined in my thesis, Agrippa' statements containing elements of Paul's anthropology are far less in number than those supporting the Hermetic and Neoplatonic ideas, and they are too vague for suggesting a substantial influence of the Apostle on Agrippa in this particular context.

Another early Christian theologian could have had a more significant influence on Agrippa in this regard. I have in mind Origen of Alexandria and his idea of the spiritual and luminous body that one develops upon the resurrection: in contrast to the soul, which is unchangeable, the body is in

[606] *Ibid*., 255.

[607] A caveat is needed here. The Pauline anthropology is an immensely complex topic, which makes my remarks inevitably simplistic. In terms of methodology, a comparative analysis of Agrippa's interpretation of Paul and those coming from his contemporaries, the catholic theologians, would be appropriate; however, it remains beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, I am certain that the few basic tenets of Paul's anthropology mentioned here—and explicated by Paul himself—do not disagree with the normative knowledge of the Catholic Church that Agrippa contested. After all, my main focus is on how Agrippa read St. Paul, not his commentators.

constant flux, but it is defined by its mould or form (εἶδος) which allows it to preserve its identity even in the process of the spiritual transformation. This spiritual body, then, becomes more of a soul than of a physical body.[608] Moreover, it appears that Origen's understanding of the mystical ascent—as delineated, for instance, in his commentary and homilies on the *Song of Songs*—pertains to the soul itself.[609] He speaks of "*man* living *in* the flesh"[610] and asserts that the aim of the mystic is to subdue the body to the soul and then to free the soul from the body. In the words of Andrew Louth,

> Behind this Platonic distinction between mind and soul, *nous* and *psyche*, lies Origen's whole understanding of the world of spiritual beings and their destiny. Originally, all spiritual beings, *logikoi*, were minds, equal to one another, all contemplating the Father through the Word. Most of these minds … grew tired of this state of bliss and fell. In falling their ardour cooled and they became souls (*psyche*, supposedly derived from *psychesthai*, to cool). As souls, they dwell in bodies which, as it were, arrest their fall and provide them with the opportunity to ascend again to contemplation of God by working themselves free from their bodies and becoming minds, *noes*, again. As *nous*, the spiritual being can contemplate the Ideas and realize its kinship with this realm.[611]

To what extent this perspective corresponds to the anthropological model discussed in my work, I leave to the reader to judge.[612] There are obvious and tempting parallels between Agrippa's and Origen's understanding of the fall. Unfortunatelly, at least to my knowledge, Agrippa makes no explicit references to Origen in the anthropological context in the way he does with e. g. the *Corpus Hermeticum*.[613] This would render an analysis of Origen's influence in the above-mentioned context highly speculative.

In all likelihood, Agrippa's differentiation between body and flesh has its roots in the Neoplatonic doctrines that were accessible to him through Ficino's translations, most notably that of

[608] See Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 59–71.
[609] See Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 52–74.
[610] *Comm. on the Song* III. 12, quoted in Louth, *The Origins*, 59. Italics mine.
[611] *Ibid*., 61. For his conclusions Louth particularly refers to Origen's *De Principiis* I.v and II.viii.
[612] See my examination of how the mind, on its way down, turns into the rational and sensitive soul, Chapter Three, 134–41.
[613] On the character of Agrippa's references to Origen see *DOP* 640, *s.v*. Origenes.

the vehicle of soul, which was also regarded as a kind of body, but not made of material elements.[614] If this "ethereal body" was innate to soul before the fall, it would make sense for Agrippa to claim that the body can be re-spiritualized. In my view, this is a more feasible explanation of the above-discussed enigmatic passage from the *De occulta philosophia* than to assume that the German humanist fully accepted the Christian doctrine of the collective bodily resurrection at the end of time.

CONTESTED NOTIONS OF PIETY

Among numerous references to the apostle Paul in the *De occulta philosophia*, one merits particular attention:

> Therefore those who are more religiously instructed do not undertake even the smallest work without divine invocation, as the Doctor of Nations commands in Colossians saying: *Whatever you shall do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks to God the Father through him.*
>
> *Iccirco qui religiosius eruditi sunt nec modicum quodvis opus absque divina invocatione adgrediuntur, sicut ad Colossenses praecipit Doctor gentium in-quiens: Quaecumque feceritis in verbo aut opere, omnia in nomine Domini Iesu Christi facite, gratias agentes Deo patri per ipsum.*[615]

The problem with this seemingly orthodox citation is that it appears in a chapter instructing the reader how to prepare for practicing ceremonial magic! (The chapter title is *De duobus ceremonialis magiae adminiculis, religione et superstitione*, "Of the two helps of ceremonial magic, religion and superstition.") Agrippa takes Paul's words literally ("whatever you shall do") and supports his own call for practicing a forbidden art with the strongest possible scriptural authority.

How is this possible at all? Is it possible that Agrippa was simply *not aware* enough of the

[614] See my discussion in Chapter Three, 127–41. This non-material body was variously called the luminous body (αὐγοειδὲς σῶμα), the astral vehicle (ἀστροειδὲς ὄχημα), or the pneumatic vehicle/body (πνευματικὸν ὄχημα/σῶμα). See also H. S. Schibli, "Hierocles of Alexandria and the Vehicle of the Soul," *Hermes*, 121, Bd., H. 1 (1993): 109–117; E. R. Dodds, ed., Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*[2] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 313–21; Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 59–106.

[615] III 4, *DOP* 409, Tyson 450. Paul's words are Italicized in English. The reference is to Colossians 3:17. I analyze this passage in my paper "To Be Born (Again) from God," 150.

position of mainstream theology towards ceremonial magic? Certainly not. In his time the German humanist was almost universally acclaimed for his wide knowledge and thorough erudition.[616] Furthermore, assuming that cases like this can be explained away by "accusing" Agrippa of a shallow theological "cherry-picking" common to Renaissance eclectics would be a plain oversimplification. In my view, his occasional practice of misinterpreting and re-contextualizing the scriptural sources should not be understood as an act of conscious intellectual "cheating," whereby the cautious reader would be lured into accepting Agrippa's unorthodox teachings just because they are replete with scriptural references. Instead, I argue that behind many such discrepancies lies a peculiar understanding of piety, which in some of its aspects matches the traditional Christian notion of piety, but in some other differs from it significantly. Most importantly, I argue that Agrippa regarded his own understanding of piety as profoundly *Christian* in the sense in which he must have understood that designation.

Power and piety

At least since Plato and his *Euthyphro*, there has been some recognition of the fact that piety is not a monolithic, readily definable category. Socrates' attempts to find a universally true definition lead to a loose conclusion that piety is a form of justice, but he fails to explain how exactly it differs from other forms of justice. On the other side, Socrates is not satisfied with Euthyphro's definition of piety as that which is pleasing to the gods, since the gods might disagree among themselves as to what is pleasing.[617] Translated into modern terms, piety is a complex and flexible notion based on a number of cultural, societal, theological, and other concerns that change over time. A good example of its complexity might be the phenomenon of sacred prostitution in the temple of Aphrodite in ancient Corinth. The worshippers of the goddess of love undoubtedly regarded such practice as pious, even

[616] See Nauert, *Agrippa*, 1–8; 116–156.
[617] *Euth*. 10a1–11b5, 11e2–1234, in Plato, *Euthyphro & Clitophon*, Commentary with Introduction by Jacques A. Bailly (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2003), 77–85, 89–97.

though any Christian would find it abominable or at least unacceptable.

Piety can be construed as the observance of religion communally, in public (such as attending religious rites or going to pilgrimages), but this aspect of piety is to a large extent a cultural and societal category, having to do with social relations and ways of public representation. As an inner category, it can be understood as a strong personal conviction, devotedness, and adherence to a system of religious belief. As such, it is always articulated within a conceptual framework defined by the sacred scriptures of the given religion and their dominant interpretations. This inner aspect of piety has much more to do with theology, i.e. a body of doctrines pertaining to man's origin, position in this world, and relation to God, his fall and final destiny, etc. These doctrines then translate into personal convictions and modes of thought and behavior that one deems appropriate and pleasing to God.

In this sense, the dominant Christian understanding of piety (which is commonly associated with humility) was decisively influenced by the Biblical account of man's fall, in which tasting the fruits from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was directly equated to hubris and disobedience. The serpent persuaded the woman into eating the fruits of that tree by making a subtle point: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."[618] The *eritis sicut dii* argument proved fatal for the mankind, but it also set the dominant tone of piety in *Christianitas*: trying to become like God is simply impious, it is a repetition of the primeval sin.

However, the Hermetic understanding of piety does not contain such limitations. On the contrary, piety *is defined* in terms of restoring one's divine nature and powers. In the *Pimander*, 24,

[618] Genesis 3:5.

Hermes addresses his master in the following way: "You have taught me all things well, o mind, just as I wanted. But tell me again about *the way up*; tell me how it happens."[619] And Poimandres replies:

> The form you used to have [i.e. the material body] vanishes. (…) The body's senses rise up and flow back to their particular sources, becoming separate parts and mingling again with the energies. (…) Thence the human being (*sic*) rushes up through the cosmic framework … and then, stripped of the effects of the cosmic framework, the human enters the region of the ogdoad; (…) Those present there rejoice together in his presence, and, having become like his companions, he also hears certain powers that exist beyond the ogdoadic reagion and hymn god with sweet voice. They rise up to the father in order and surrender themselves to the powers, and, *having become powers, they enter into god. This is the final good for those who have received knowledge: to be made god*.[620]

This passage, in which "the human being" equals the inner or essential man (stripped of his material body), reads almost as an inversion of the Biblical account of the fall. Man *is supposed* to gain the divine knowledge and the power that accompanies it, he is supposed to become like god. This is the core of the Hermetic idea of rebirth, which is explicitly identified with salvation: "[N]o one can be saved before being born again."[621] Moreover, in stark contrast to Christian anthropological monism, the Hermetic notion of piety is informed by radical dualism: "My child, it is impossible to be engaged in both realms, the mortal and the divine. Since there are two kinds of entities, corporeal and incorporeal, corresponding to mortal and divine, one is left to choose one or the other. (…) *One cannot have both together*."[622]

That Agrippa embraces this mode of piety (partly through Lazzarelli's mediation) is demonstrated throughout my work, but I refer again to his crucial statements from the *De occulta*

[619] Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 5. Italics mine.
[620] *CH* I, 24–26, in *ibid*., 5–6. Italics mine. See also *CH* X, 7–8, in *ibid*., 31–32, and *CH* X, 25, in *ibid*., 36. See also Lazzarelli's paraphrase of this passage in the *Crater Hermetis*, 21.4, in Hanegraaff, Bouthoorn, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*, 230–31. In accordance with his interpretation of the *Hermetica*, Lazzarelli puts an emphasis on the divinely empowered man's ability to "beget a divine offspring" and "procreate for God."
[621] *CH* XIII, 1, in *ibid*., 49.
[622] *CH* IV, 6, in *ibid*., 16. Italics mine.

philosophia III, 1 and III, 5:[623] 1) There is nothing more pleasant and acceptable to God than a man perfectly pious and truly religious, who excels all other men; 2) Faith makes man the same with the superior entities and makes him enjoy the same power with them; it is the root of all miracles and enables us to approach God and obtain the divine power. These two statements epitomize Agrippa's understanding of piety and faith, which is evidently closer to the Hermetic conceptual framework than to the Christian. When measured against such a criterion, it is not surprising that Agrippa evaluates the spiritual advancement of the prophets and the apostles by their power to perform wonders.[624]

In this context, the sharp opposition between Simon Magus and the apostle Peter, which Michael H. Keefer postulates as the main contradiction in Agrippa's desired synthesis, somewhat loses its edge and becomes the question of contested notions of piety.[625] It does not relieve Agrippa's thought of its basic tension, but it does diminish the "demonic" side of it, putting in into a more proper perspective: that of the Hermetic understanding of piety, faith, and religion in general. The same goes for D. P. Walker's characterization of Agrippa's magic as "demonic."[626] What is tacitly built into such characterization is the standard Christian view on piety, which is taken as the sole criterion for discerning between various types of spiritual activities.

As thoroughly documented by Marc van der Poel, Agrippa cherished the most fervent Christian convictions; the fact that his "mode" of Christianity differed significantly from the mainstream raises the question: how exactly did Agrippa—or, more precisely, the author of the works analyzed here—understand Christianity? And even more importantly: how did the author understand *his own participation* in Christianity? In the following section I propose my own view on this problem.

[623] *DOP* 402–403, Tyson 441, and *DOP* 412–13, Tyson 453. See Chapter Four, 177–78 and 181–82 for the exact quotations and the accompanying discussion.
[624] III 6, *DOP* 414, Tyson 455. Once again I refer to a similar notion in the Kabbalah, i.e. Gershom Scholem's suggestion that the creation of a golem could be seen as a sort of test for proving one's level of spiritual development (see p. 218–19).
[625] Keefer, "Agrippa's Dilemma," 645–50.
[626] D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 96.

An exegetical way out: towards a tripartite interpretation of Christianity

Having discussed in detail the anthropological themes related to Cornelius Agrippa, I now come back to the so-called Agrippan question, this time with the above-delineated considerations in mind. In my opinion, this question, which is alternately formulated in scholarship as the "skepticism–credulity" or the "piety–impiety" opposition, can be best approached by examining the exact nature of Agrippa's Christian self-identification, inasmuch as it can be inferred from his literary production.

When, following his successful series of public lectures on Reuchlin' *De verbo mirifico* in Dôle in 1509, Agrippa was violently attacked by the Franciscan Jean Catilinet for being a "judaizing heretic," he replied with equal zeal in his *Expostulatio*: "But I am a Christian, and neither death nor life shall separate me from my faith in Christ, and I prefer the Christian doctors to all other scholars, and yet I do not despise the Jewish rabbis."[627]

When in 1531 the Louvain theologians issued a formal condemnation of Agrippa's *De vanitate*, the German humanist responded with two fiercely intonated apologetic, polemical texts, the *Apologia adversus calumnias* [An apology against calumnies] and the *Quaerela super calumnia* [A complaint against calumnies].[628] In a subchapter titled *The basis of Agrippa's defense: allegiance to the Church of Rome*,[629] Van der Poel adduces a number of Agrippa's statements from these two writings to demonstrate that he saw himself as a deeply devoted Catholic. Among these statements one reads the following: "I shall show that I have never written as a doctrinal statement, nor believe or hold for true, anything that is the opposite of what the Catholic church affirms as doctrine, or believes, or feels, or

[627] *Expostulatio cum Ioanne Catilineti super expositione libri Ioannis Capnionis de verbo mirifico*, in Agrippa, *Opera II*, 494: *Verum ego Christianus sum, nec mors, nec vita, separabit me a fide Christi, Christianosque doctores omnibus praefero, tamen Iudaeorum rabinos non contemno*. Quoted and translated by Van der Poel, *Agrippa, The Humanist Theologian*, 20.

[628] *Ibid*., 120–21. Van der Poel also cites an interesting letter from that period, in which Agrippa writes to a correspondent: "I have answered the Louvain calumniators modestly, yet not without salt and vinegar, and also mustard, yet without any touch of sweet oil. I shall publish it as soon as possible, perhaps not without some new calamity, since *a new truth* usually brings forth new hate (*ut solet nova veritas novum gignere odium*)." (*Epistolae* VII 3, in *ibid*., 122. Italics in the translation mine.)

[629] Van der Poel, *Agrippa, The Humanist Theologian*, 133–40.

holds for true."[630] And further: "Yet my mind is always sincere and I profess to be a Catholic, and I believe that I have not indulged in the liberty granted by the declamation to such an extent that I have become an apostate of the orthodox faith."[631] To these declarations of orthodoxy one can add the entire Chapter 100 of the *De vanitate,* titled *De Verbo Dei*, which conveys Agrippa's faith in the Holy Scriptures in the strongest possible terms, or the "apologetic" chapter nine of the third book of *De occulta philosophia*, which reads almost as the Apostles' Creed.[632]

Here, again, one is faced with Agrippa's multilayered approach aimed at different parts of his target audience. As evident from his correspondence and other biographical details, the two main groups in Agrippa's target audience were his fellow humanists and the category Richard Kieckhefer conveniently terms "the clerical underworld," encompassing clerics in the broadest sense of that word (monks, friars, active and failed university students, etc).[633] It would make sense to claim that Agrippa's more "orthodox" statements were intended for the sensitive ears of humanists such as Erasmus, whereas those more "magical" were aimed at the occult theoreticians and practitioners of all sorts (a literary thread in Agrippa's opus that later led to the appearance of the spurious Fourth Book of the *De occulta philosophia*). However, such a simplified conclusion would fail to account for the pains that the author took to delineate and discuss his anthropological views and convictions (which are, by the way, barely relevant for practical magic). In my view, the works of Cornelius Agrippa reveal an author who was in a dire need to define his own position—not only to his readers, but to himself—in

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[630] *Ibid*., 134: *Ostendam me nihil unquam assertive scripsisse, credere, aut tenere, cuius contrarium asserit, credit, sentit et tenet ecclesia catholica* (*Apologia*, introduction, fols. B i^{r-v}).
[631] Ibid., 135: *Semper tamen sincerus animus est, et me catholicum esse profiteer, nec usque adeo declamatoriae licentiate me indulsisse puto, quod ab orthodoxa fide desciverim* (*Apologia*, chapter 1, fol. C iij^{r}).
[632] III 9, *DOP* 422–23, Tyson 465–66. Tyson interprets that chapter as Agrippa's veiled irony.
[633] See Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 151–56. Erasmus is the most famous example of the first group, Trithemius of the second. On Agrippa's potential readership see e.g. Van der Poel, *Agrippa, The Humanist Theologian*, 30–31, 225–26; Nauert, *Agrippa*, 74–79, 89–92, 106, 109. On Agrippa's attitudes toward his readership see also Miles, "Occult Retraction," 439–45. In his analysis, however, Miles overinterprets Agrippa's use of different authorial voices and ends up in a sort of radical deconstruction of his *De occulta philosophia*.

the tense atmosphere of religious changes and controversies, and of conflicting modes of spirituality, which marked the late fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century Western Europe.

In Agrippa's time, as Charles Nauert points out, "the whole movement for church reform was amorphous and showed no clear distinction between fundamentally Catholic critics of church abuses and individuals who displayed significant deviations on matters of doctrine." According to him, this uncertainty rested "on inability to establish valid criteria for judging the position of individuals on the broad spectrum of early sixteenth-century religious belief."[634] Yet, there *was* one firm criterion for judging the position of the reform-minded individuals: that of their attitude towards the basic tenet of Christianity, the divine revelation of Jesus Christ. As I emphasize in the Introduction of this work,[635] Agrippa, Ficino, Lazzarelli, and other Renaissance syncretists clearly differed from other reformers by evidently experiencing what I term the "insufficiency of the Revelation." In stark contrast to the humanist *ad fontes* principle, they all found, in one way or another, that the *fontes* were not located only—or even primarily—in Scripture, and that the wrongdoings of the schoolmen and clergy were not the cause but rather the *consequence* of the main problem. And the problem was, in their view, that the thread of the "original" Christianity was almost lost and that, consequently, it had to be "reconstructed." This led Marsilio Ficino to postulate "a myth of a continuous esoteric tradition," to quote Nauert again.[636] According to Ficino's pseudo-historical reconstruction, "the revelation given to Moses supposedly included an esoteric interpretation which passed into cabala of the Jews and into the Hermetic literature of the Egyptians,"[637] and from there into Christianity and the philosophical mysticism of the Pythagoreans and the Platonists, respectively. In my dissertation I demonstrate that, at least with respect to anthropological topics, Agrippa regarded the *Corpus Hermeticum* as no less sacred

[634] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 162–63.
[635] See Introduction, 19.
[636] Nauert, "Magic and Skepticism in Agrippa's Thought," 167.
[637] *Ibid*.

than the Bible in the sense that it also conveyed a divine revelation. Moreover, he accepted Ficino's notion of Hermes Trismegistos as a divine prophet and, even not too emphatically, Lazzarelli's identification of Poimandres with Christ himself.

These highly heterodox ideas provided Agrippa the reader with what Hans Robert Jauss called the "horizon of expectations," a preexisting system of expectations based on one's already formed assumptions, convictions, literary and intellectual experiences, and so on.[638] Agrippa's literary experience of the *prisca theologia*, acquired through Ficino and other authors, as well as his acceptance of this alternative, esoteric history of the revelation, formed the basis on which he interpreted his theological readings. In this process of creative reading, the strongest potential for heterodox exegesis was to be found in those elements of the text which Marc van der Poel calls "the uncertainties of the revelation,"[639] or which Wolfgang Iser terms *Leerstellen*, "empty places" that need to be filled by the reader.[640] A good example in this regard is Paul's notion of σῶμα πνευματικόν, a notion that offered possibilities for vastly different interpretations. It is irrelevant for my analysis that, from the today's point of view, this process of constructing a new orthodoxy is usually seen as a sign of historical naivety lacking precise philological and other tools. What I am concerned about here is the intellectual mechanism that made this kind of doctrinal blending possible.

But why was there the need for the blending at all? The above-delineated observations inevitably raise the following questions: what kind of a Christian and Catholic Agrippa believed himself to be and why did he feel the need to "extend" the scope of a revelation that lay in the very

[638] For Jauss' concept of the "horizon of expectation" (*Erwartungshorizont*) see Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Asthetic of Reception*, tr. Timothy Bahti, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 3–45. Agrippa's "horizon of expectation" is most succinctly formulated by Wayne Shumaker in the following way: "like many other scholars of the period he tends to accept everything ancient as true and right" (Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissances*, 155).
[639] See Introduction, 20 n. 22.
[640] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 59–60, 172–75, 206. Related to "empty places" is Iser's concept of "indeterminacy" ("Appelstruktur" in German): the text "appeals" to the reader to realize the potential offered by it, to "determine" its meaning. See also Schmitz, *Modern Literary Theory and Ancient Texts*, 88–91.

foundations of the Christian religion? Why was the core doctrine of the New Testament—Christ's divine incarnation and resurrection—not enough for him in terms of theology? It is indeed hard to imagine that a man of Agrippa's education and knowledge would not be the first to recognize himself as a plain heretic or apostate. However, not a word in his writings or letters (with the seeming exception of the famous retraction) suggests that he saw himself as such.

The answer to this puzzle could lie in his distinct understanding of Christianity. The only way for Agrippa to come to terms with his own heterodoxy and preserve the conviction of orthodoxy was to develop a polyvalent and nuanced view on Christianity, whereby he would embrace some of its aspects as genuine, and reject some other as corrupt or at least bring them under suspicion as requiring to be reformed. Based on the examinations of Agrippa's anthropological ideas presented so far (especially of the role of gnosis in his thought) and with a necessary degree of simplification, I propose the following tripartite model that could help us understand Agrippa's "orthodoxy."

My model suggests that the author of the *De occulta philosophia* distinguished between three different levels or aspects of Christianity that might be provisionally termed *revelatory Christianity*, *doctrinal Christianity*, and *historical Christianity*. These three are, of course, theoretical constructs and are not intended to "reconstruct" Agrippa's "actual state of mind," but to offer an approximation of his religious self-identification based on his publicly expressed attitudes. The advantage of this model is that it analytically fragments what is otherwise commonly taken as a self-explanatory term: these three categories allow sorting out different aspects of Agrippa's religious self-fashioning in his works, breaking away from the often evoked, unnuanced view of Christianity as a monolithic notion. It is also important to emphasize that there are no sharp boundaries between the three mentioned aspects and that they overlap in many respects.

In the broadest sense, revelatory Christianity implied in Agrippa's works encompasses all

instances of direct, divine revelation to man which is unquestionable and not subject to ratiocination. Among these, Christ's revelation in the New Testament is admittedly the highest and the most recent occurrence of this kind, but not the only one. According to Marsilio Ficino's concept of *prisca theologia*, which Agrippa inherits, the chain of divine revelations goes back to pre-Christian sages or mythical figures such as Plato, Pythagoras, Hermes, Zoroaster, and Moses. As the incarnated Logos, Christ is the consummation of all previous revelations, but he does not cancel them. On the contrary, in Agrippa's syncretistic vision, his divine revelation only *confirms* and *reaffirms* them. How else could one understand Agrippa's call for the rehabilitation of magic, which "was once accounted by all ancient philosophers the chiefest science, and by ancient wise men and priests was always held in great veneration"?[641] What would be the purpose of magic *after* Christ's revelatory and redemptory coming to this world? One could thus say that, for Agrippa, revelatory Christianity is a "meta-religious" phenomenon whose various forms of manifestation emerge, develop, disappear, and then re-emerge over time. It can be compared to a number of doors left open for the mankind and leading to the divine, but not with each door open always and at the same time.

In other words, for Agrippa, revelatory Christianity amounts to what is usually referred to in the academic study of Western esotericism as "Tradition": "the idea that there exists an enduring tradition of superior traditional wisdom, available to humanity since the earliest periods of history and kept alive through the ages, perhaps by a chain of divinely inspired sages or initiatory groups."[642] That Agrippa views the "true" Christianity in these terms is evident from his explicit differentiation between the secret, "esoteric" Christianity and its "exoteric" counterpart:

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[641] *[C]um olim primum sublimitatis fastigium uno omnium veterum philosophorum iudicio teneret et a priscis illis sapientibus et sacerdotibus summa semper in veneratione habita fuerit* (The letter to Trithemius dated April 8 1510, *DOP* 68, Tyson, liii).

[642] Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1125–35 (the entry "Tradition," authored by Hanegraaff himself). He also points to the basic paradox underlying the notion of Tradition, which pertains to Agrippa's view on Christianity too: "If the fundamental verities of Christianity had already been known before the birth of Christ, did this not undermine the uniqueness of the Christian revelation and perhaps even make it superfluous?

> Christ also himself, while he lived on Earth, spoke after that manner and fashion that only the more intimate disciples should understand the mystery of the Word of God, but the other should perceive the parables only. (…) Therefore, it is not fit that those secrets which are amongst a few wise men, and communicated by mouth only, should be publicly written. Wherefore you will pardon me if I pass over in silence many and the chiefest secret mysteries of ceremonial magic.
>
> *Ipse etiam Christus, dum adhuc in terris ageret, ea lege et ratione loquutus est, ut tantummodo secretiores discipuli intelligerent mysterium verbi Dei, caeteri autem solas parabolas sentirent. (...) Non decet itaque arcane, quae inter paucos sapientes solo ore communicanda sunt, publicis committere literis: quare veniam mihi dabitis, si multa eaque potiora ceremonialis magiae arcana sacramenta silentio fuerim pretergressus*.[643]

In this highly important passage several crucial points emerge: 1) the idea that the "true" Christianity is reserved for a chosen minority bound by initiatic silence; 2) the idea that the core of it is "the mystery of the Word of God"; 3) the crucial role of oral transmission (*solo ore*), which somewhat devalues the Christian literary production, especially the Holy Scriptures and the Patristic literature; 4) finally, an explicit confession that the mystery of the Word embraces ceremonial magic too.[644] Points two and four have been discussed extensively in my dissertation. As for initiatic silence, it is openly mentioned as a requirement in Agrippa's above-quoted letter to Trithemius and his master's response.[645]

Finally, revelatory Christianity, as implied in Agrippa's works, is fundamentally based on the notion of direct personal revelation, or γνῶσις, as opposed to the rational knowledge of the divine. This is strongly implied in the well-known Chapter 100 of the *De vanitate*, which can be read as a sort of Agrippa's manifesto of his religious self-identification. Although it is commonly regarded as a token of his adherence to Biblical humanism guided by the principle of *sola scriptura*, this chapter contains a passage that can be interpreted in the light of the Hermetic and Lazzarellian notions of revelation:

[643] III 2, *DOP* 405–6, Tyson 444. This passage appears in a chapter titled "Of concealing of those things which are secret in religion" (*De silentio et occultatione earum quae secreta in religione sunt*). It is important to remind the reader that the opening chapters of Book Three are crucial for gaining a proper perspective on the rest of the book.
[644] Note also Agrippa's distinction between external and internal religion in *DOP* III, 4. He makes the same differentiation in the *De vanitate*, Ch. 60, where he extols "inwardness in religion" as opposed to "external ceremonies." See Introduction, 23–24. See also Nauert, *Agrippa*, 181–82.
[645] See Introduction, 23 n. 31, and Chapter One, 37 n. 68.

> Now the truth and understanding of the Canonical Scripture depends only upon the authority of God revealing the same and it cannot be comprehended by any judgment of the senses, by the over-reaching reason, by any syllogism of demonstration, by any science, by any speculation, by any contemplation, or by any human force, but only *by faith in Jesus Christ poured out into the soul from God the Father*, by the Holy Ghost.
>
> *Scripturarum (dico canonicarum) veritas et intelligentia a sola Dei relevantis authoritate dependet, quae non ullo sensuum iudicio, nulla ratione discurrente, nulla scientia, nulla speculatione, nulla contemplatione, nullis denique humanis viribus comprehendi potest, nisi sola fide in Iesum Christum, a Deo patre per Spiritum sanctum, in animam nostram transfusa*.[646]

In my understanding, the *transfusion of faith* into one's soul is an image that strongly corresponds to Agrippa's notion of a direct personal revelation and makes one of the main constituents of what I term revelatory Christianity. Since it is not subject to any other agent than God himself, it cannot be delusional, corrupted, or misinterpreted. It is beyond all questions and doubts; hence it is the genuine Christianity whose aspiring devotee Agrippa believes himself to be. However, due to its nature it is also the most evasive of the three aspects of Christianity since it is impossible to find a way to rubber stamp an inner state of enlightenment and revelation. It lies entirely in the domain of *mens*.[647]

Doctrinal Christianity can be understood as a historical attempt to codify the direct experience and knowledge of the revelation. Taken in its broadest sense, this aspect includes the entirety of Christian literary production ranging from the Holy Scriptures to the theological writings of Agrippa's own time.[648] However, in the process of codifying γνῶσις, parts of it are inevitably changed, misinterpreted, or simply lost. Thus, doctrinal Christianity preserves only bits and pieces of revelatory

[646] *De vanitate*, Ch. 100, in Agrippa, *Opera II*, 299; *The Vanity of Arts and Sciences* (London: Printed by J. C. for Samuel Speed, 1676), 350. Italics in the translation mine. It is also interesting to note that in a chapter on judicial astrology (*De vanitate*, Ch. 31) Agrippa establishes "inward inspiration" as the only factor (apart from making a pact with the Devil) which can make astrological prognostication actually work: "Those who have prescribed the rules or prognostication set down their maxims so various and contradictory that it is impossible for a prognosticator, out of so many various and disagreeing opinions, to be able to pronounce anything certain, unless he be inwardly inspired with some secret and hidden instinct and sense of future things" (*The Vanity of Arts and Sciences*, 90). The idea of inward inspiration becomes more understandable if considered in the context of Agrippa's emphasis on a direct, revelatory knowledge of the divine.

[647] Thus, for a modern scholar, revelatory Christianity remains a purely speculative construct; once it reaches any sort of reification, either in the form of writings or historically recorded phenomena, it passes into the other two modes.

[648] It also includes various non-literary forms of expressing dogmatic thought such as public debates, orations, university lectures etc., but these were usually preserved in a written form.

Christianity and it is a duty of a divinely inspired exegete to retrieve the inner core of the revelation from distortion. It is evident from Agrippa's writings that, for him, parts of doctrinal Christianity are *not* Christianity at all. Some are even directly opposed to the spirit of revelatory Christianity and of diabolical origin. How else should one understand Agrippa's fierce, poisonous attacks on scholastic theologians, those hated *theologistae* and *sophistae* who had "hijacked" the true, sacred theology (*sanctum theologiae nomen furto et rapina sibi temere usurpant*)?[649] He goes so far as to proclaim the Devil himself the father of scholastic theology.[650]

In other words, one could define Agrippa's doctrinal Christianity as a *historical* phenomenon based on human intellectual and literary production and, as such, it is for him a legitimate field for debate and examination, a natural "playground" for the exercise of *ratio*. Hence the importance of *declamatio*, Agrippa's favorite literary genre, which treats various "uncertainties of the revelation" (to quote Van der Poel once again), in the spirit of open dialogue.[651] Agrippa seems to regard doctrinal Christianity as a realm of Socratic maieutics, in which the bits and pieces of revelatory Christianity should be unearthed in a dialectical process of free discussion and critical thinking. Thus, in somewhat simplified terms, it might be said that revelatory Christianity mostly engages Agrippa the theurgist, whereas doctrinal Christianity occupies Agrippa the humanist.

Evidently, these nuances in Agrippa's view of Christianity raise the question of the relation between the two discussed modes. In other words, in which of the Christian literary works—and to what extent—Agrippa acknowledges the presence of γνῶσις? It is a complex question that requires a thorough analysis of the German humanist's attitude towards each of the authors he refers to, and as

[649] *De triplici ratione* V,18 in Perrone Compagni, *Ermetismo e Cristianesimo*, 154. For the entire diatribe see *ibid*., 154–65. See also Agrippa's critique of scholastic theology in Chapter 97 of the *De vanitate*, where he regards it as impious and in some of its aspects even heretical.

[650] *Ibid*., 160: *Inventor autem huius tam pestiferae facultatis diabolus, primus ille callidus et perniciosus sophista.*

[651] See Chapter One, 71–72. Van der Poel has analysed in a masterful way Agrippa's complex position within the contested fields of scholasticism, Biblical and humanist theology, and Renaissance syncretism: see my overview in Chapter One, 56–59. Van der Poel's analysis mostly pertains to what I term doctrinal Christianity.

such it surpasses the scope of my dissertation. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: as noted by Charles Nauert and Marc van der Poel, Agrippa's treatment of his Christian sources is governed by the principle of *the temporal closeness* to the revelation for assessing the credibility of a given source.[652] In this sense, it is probably one of his main criteria for assessing the degree of γνῶσις present in a particular writing. However, regardless of this question, it is safe to conclude that, for Agrippa, doctrinal Christianity is *not* the proper subject of faith and cannot be unequivocally regarded as part of the eternal, genuine tradition of spiritual revelations.

Of the three proposed modes, *historical Christianity* is admittedly the hardest to pinpoint as it obviously embraces the other two: both personal revelation and the codification of gnosis take place in certain points of time and are thus inevitably marked by historicity. However, what I have in mind is a plethora of historical phenomena and practices commonly labeled as Christian which Agrippa strongly disregards, if not even openly abhors. This pertains to his profoundly negative attitudes towards the widespread practice of witch-hunt, the wrongdoings of the clergy, from simple monks to popes, the excessive veneration of the relics, etc.[653] To a large extent, his violent anticlericalism is the result of historical circumstances, with the blossoming of humanist theology on the one side and the emergence of the Lutheran movement on the other. However, there is another dimension to it: Agrippa's conviction that the "true" Christianity is an inner, revelatory tradition not accessible to many. This is clearly reflected in his disregard for the external acts of worship: "Those carnal and external ceremonies are unable to bring men close to God, to whom nothing is acceptable except faith in Jesus

[652] Nauert, *Agrippa*, 128; Van der Poel, *Agrippa, the Humanist Theologian*, 85. This attitude is evident in Agrippa's references to the Bible and some of the early Church Fathers (above all, Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite). For the same reason, on matters of church history Agrippa preferred Eusebius and Hegesippus "because of their greater nearness in time to the events of early ecclesiastical history" (Nauert, *Agrippa*, 128).

[653] See Nauert, *Agrippa*, 174–82, for a detailed discussion on Agrippa's criticism of contemporary Christian institutions, customs, and practices. He attacks monks for hypocrisy, lack of morality, arrogance, and even the types of their robes. He attacks popes for their excessive political power and self-proclaimed ability to release souls from purgatory. He criticizes excessive devotion to images and relics (although he admits that Christ has performed many miracles through saints), etc.

Christ, with ardent imitation of Him in love, and firm hope of salvation and reward."[654] As Nauert points out, "[t]his doctrine, despite a superficial similarity, is not Lutheran justification by faith alone, but rather the stress on inwardness in religion. (…) As Agrippa sees it, perfect Christians require little or no externality in religion."[655] The opposition between "internal" and "external" Christianity emerges once again, with the former being regarded as genuine, intrinsic, original, and the latter being termed "carnal," with all the connotations this term carries in Agrippa's thought.[656]

To sum up, it is evident that much of what went under the label of Christianity in Agrippa's time fell far below the expectations he had for the pure revelatory tradition that he thought he found. In other words, the kernel of γνῶσις he believed had been sparsely preserved in doctrinal Christianity was even more at risk in the social and institutional manifestations of the Christian religion.

Thus I arrive at the main conclusion suggested by my analysis of Agrippa's complex understanding of Christianity: the author of the *De occulta philosophia* could regard himself as a faithful, devout Christian insofar as he construed Christianity in the above-delineated manner. It implied that he did not consider doctrinal and historical Christianity to be binding in any intrinsic way, as opposed to revelatory Christianity, which carried the living tradition of gnosis and was thus the one and only *fides Christiana*.

[654] *Carnales illae et externae ceremoniae nequeunt hominess promovere ad deum, apud quem nihil est acceptum, praeter fidem in Iesum Christum, cum ardenti imitatione illius in charitate, ac firma spe salutis et praemii* (*De vanitate*, Ch. 60, quoted and translated by Nauert, *Agrippa*, 181).
[655] *Ibid.*
[656] If one pursues further the analogy between the suggested modes of Christianity and the parts of soul, it could be said that the forms of historical Christianity that Agrippa criticizes mostly belong to the realm of *idolum*. He emphasizes their *externality* and *carnality*, as conveniently exemplified by the materiality of relics.

CONCLUSION

In my dissertation I approach Cornelius Agrippa's work in the perspective of his anthropology and with the idea that Agrippa's views on man can clarify his ambiguous position on the intellectual map of the early sixteenth-century Europe, including his religious self-identification. I take into account the emphasis that several present-day Agrippan scholars put on the linguistic aspects of his writings viewing them as multilayered and rhetoricized, marked by shifting authorial voices and intentional ambiguities.

By analyzing a good number of passages from Agrippa's writings, particularly from the *De occulta philosophia*, and putting them into a comparative perspective, I suggest that Agrippa's understanding of man, his ontological status, and constitution correspond more closely to the dualist Neoplatonic and Hermetic paradigms than to the mainstream Christian notion of man, which is strongly marked by anthropological monism. Agrippa's anthropological ideas are closely related to his views on cosmology and cosmogony, which are based on the notion of divine emanations and a living universe pervaded with cosmic correspondences. Being a microcosm, man shares with the universe its emanational nature, i.e. he is gradually and only partly descended into the world, with his original spiritual nature remaining in the sphere of transcendence. In my view, Agrippa's concept of a partly descended soul closely corresponds to that of Plotinus.

I argue that Agrippa's anthropology is articulated in two triads: 1) that of soul, body, and spirit, and 2) that of the mind, rational soul, and sensitive soul. Regarding the first triad, I show that, despite their ambiguities, Agrippa's views are predominantly dualist, based on the Neoplatonic and Hermetic notions of soul as the true self and body as its external garment. The third element, spirit, serves as an

intermediary between the two ontologically incongruous entities, soul and body. The second triad pertains to soul by revealing its tripartite structure: the mind (*mens*), rational soul (*anima*) and sensitive soul (*idolum*). However, I argue that, in Agrippa understanding, only the mind is the seat of the "true soul," whereas the rational and the sensitive soul more properly belong to the level of spirit. In other words, man's descent into the world follows the emanational pattern from the divine mind to the physical body, unfolding in a sequence of closely interrelated entities with an increasing degree of materiality. This is the conceptual basis for Agrippa's doctrine of ascension, which he understands as precisely the reverse movement, i.e. the unification of the lower parts of the soul with the divine mind. Following the Hermetic paradigm, he views it as the process of *obtaining the mind*, whereby man regains his prelapsarian state, divine nature and powers, and restores his damaged relationship with God. In Agrippa's writings the idea of spiritual ascension alternately appears as the notion of spiritual rebirth or regeneration.

Next, I argue that Agrippa's theory of magic can hardly be examined appropriately without taking into account its anthropological and psychological components. I show that this theory is intrinsically related to Agrippa's view of the human soul as a tripartite entity. Thus, I examine how the Agrippan magician utilizes various emotional and affective states in his operation and how the nature of these states determines the purpose and scope of magical operation. By combining the Ficinian doctrine of *spiritus* and Al-Kindi's ray-theory Agrippa explains in detail the mechanisms of magical operation, while at the same time he stresses the importance of focused attention as a necessary element in any form of magic. Finally, I demonstrate that, for Agrippa, intellectual or religious magic serves ultimately one purpose: that of obtaining the divine mind, i.e. uniting the lower parts of the soul with the highest one. In other words, magic in its highest form of appearance bears a predominantly religious significance and as such it is closely akin to Iamblichus's concept of theurgy.

In the last chapter I analyse Agrippa's exegetical works, particularly his *De originali peccato*, in the context of the above-mentioned considerations and show that his reading of the Biblical account of man's fall is profoundly Hermetic, with a crucial emphasis on carnality as the decisive factor in the fall. I revisit the question of the body and conclude that Agrippa's hints at the spiritualization of the body have more in common with the Neoplatonic concept of ὄχημα or the astral vehicle of the soul than with the Pauline notion of the spiritual body. Moreover, his entire concept of ascension, or spiritual rebirth, differs significantly from the New Testamental doctrine of man's salvation and shows clear traits of Neoplatonic and Hermetic teachings of the soul's return to the state of the prelapsarian perfection.

In the end, I revisit the long-debated question of Agrippa's "true" religious allegiance by applying the results of my analysis to his distinct understanding of Christianity and orthodoxy. I argue that his publicly proclaimed religious self-identification as a devout Christian and Catholic cannot be comprehended in a meaningful way unless his interpretations of piety and orthodoxy are scrutinized and analytically fragmented. Thus, I introduce a tripartite model of Agrippa's understanding of Christinity, which consists of three distinct and to some extent contested modes: revelatory, doctrinal, and historical Christianity. Based on a number of passages from Agrippa's works, I suggest that only revelatory Christianity matches his notion of the "genuine" Christianity, although it is evident that he interprets it in a strongly heterodox way. In other words, Agrippa's "dilemma" amounts to the problem of different and mutually contested notions of piety that he inherited through the spiritual traditions accessible in his time. As a consequence, the suggested nuancing of terms casts a somewhat different light on the "demonic" nature of Agrippa's spiritual enterprise. That said, it is important to bear in mind that my analysis and conclusions remain limited to the image of the author as projected through his writings, without the ambition of reconstructing the German humanist's "true" state of mind.

Despite the inherent paradox of his ideas, it is evident that Cornelius Agrippa, like other

Renaissance syncretists before and after him, attempted to build, promote, and ultimately defend the notion of a "pious Christian magician." What he obviously did not count on was the resilience and strength of the millennial traditions standing behind, defining, and reaffirming the conflicting characters of the Apostle Peter and Simon Magus.

Perhaps this is why, in Valery Bryusov's novel mentioned in the Preface of this work, the pious Christian magician, one of the most famous in his field, remains alone, downhearted, and defeated in his dim study. His idea of piety will not be the turning point in the much needed reform of Chistianity. Christ remains Christ, Poimandres remains Poimandres, and he, Agrippa von Nettesheim, remains a tired, impoverished visionary, misunderstood in the main message he attempted to convey: *that the sky is surely open to us and that we should go that way*.[657] Eventually, it turns out that the ladder is not the same for everyone, and the same could be said of the sky too.

[657] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VIII, 186.

ABBREVIATIONS

BLS Albert Blaise, *Lexicon Latinitatis Medii Aevi: praesertim ad res ecclesiasticas investigandas pertinens. Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs du Moyen-Age* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975).

CH The abbreviation refers to particular discourses and chapters of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. See the Bibliography section for the Greek, Latin, and English versions used in this work.

DCG Charles Dufresne, sieur Du Cange, ed. *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis*, 1st ed. (Paris: Billaine, 1678; reprint: Kolkata: Saraswati Press, 2012).

DOP Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, ed. Vittoria Perrone Compagni (Leiden: Brill, 1992). The abbreviation also refers to particular books and chapters of the work.

NRM Jan Frederik Niermeyer, C. van de Kieft, J. W. J. Burgers. *Mediae Latinitatis lexicon minus, A-L + M-Z, Lexique latin médiéval, Medieval Latin Dictionary, Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch,*. 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

LS Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

LSJ Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)

OLD P. G. W. Glare, ed. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

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Hermetis Trismegisti Poemander. Ad fidem codicum manu scriptorium recognovit Gustavus Parthey. Berlin: Libraria fr. Nicolai, 1854.

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