



# **BACKSTAGE AT CAMILLO'S ESOTERIC THEATRE**

By

Judita Uremović



MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

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(Croatia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Examiner

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External Reader

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External Supervisor

I, the undersigned, **Judita Uremović**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person s or institution s copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 31 August 2021

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Signature

## Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to give a closer insight into an esoteric purpose behind the Theatre of Giulio Camillo Delminio. Camillo was among those pre-modern scholars who promoted the causal, deductive, and organic scientific approach, which included the central question about the nature of the human soul. The current thesis contains an overview of philosophical streams, ideas, and concepts that, to my understanding, inspired Camillo in the development of his *Idea of the Theatre*. These include Christian Kabbalism, Hermeticism, and Renaissance Neoplatonism. Camillo's Theatre had diverse interpretations throughout the centuries, namely rhetorical, encyclopedic, and in recent times iconographic aspects. Yet, his esoteric aspect remains relatively neglected. This thesis aims to make hidden meanings of Camillo's images in the process of transmutation of the soul more visible. This implies a shift in the interpretation of the Theatre from the Art of Memory to the Art of Recalling, in the Neoplatonic sense.

I shed closer light on Neoplatonic sources of Camillo's archetypes, such as Porphyry, Proclus, and Macrobius. Certain points of similarities are compared regarding supercelestial and celestial influences between Camillo and Camillo's contemporaries, mainly Francesco Giorgi, Pico della Mirandola, and Henry Cornelius Agrippa. The purpose of these comparisons is to get a better understanding of formative elements in Camillo's system. Camillo's sources and inspirative elements will lead us to the backstage of Camillo's enterprise, where we could get a clearer view of the esoteric purpose of the Theatre. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to the recent research of this Renaissance thinker.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisors, Professor György E. Szönyi and Professor Marcell Sebök for their patience, generous support, and guidance through my research. I am very grateful to Professor Szönyi for the invaluable suggestions and directions concerning the content and contextual understanding of the esoteric scene of the time. I would like to express my immense gratitude to Professor György Geréby, who supported my work in the most difficult times and provided me with the insights and suggestions which greatly contributed to the development and completion of my work. I owe my gratitude to Professor Vera Eliasova for her kindness and helpful instructions for completing the thesis, given the extremely short notice. Furthermore, I wish to thank the faculty and staff of Medieval Studies and History departments at CEU for their encouragement and support throughout my study.

I owe special thanks to Professor Lina Bolzoni, who welcomed me at The Scuola Normale Superiore in 2016 and kindly encouraged me in the first steps of my research. Professor Bolzoni's marvellous and diligent research of Giulio Camillo inspired me and broaden my perspective about the secrets of the Theatre.

The deepest gratitude I owe to my mother for her inestimable wisdom, tireless support, and insights without which the completion of this work would be impossible. I am very grateful to my sister for her help with the formatting and the final layout. I wish to thank my husband and my daughter for their patience and support during this long period of time.

I am very grateful to my friend Nathan Marshall, who meticulously read and proofread various drafts of the thesis, when it was in almost unreadable forms, and always encouraged me to continue with my research. I am also greatly indebted to my friend Flora Ghazaryan, who kept me going when it seemed I would not be able to complete the thesis, and who helped me with the methodology and organization of the work.

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## Introduction

### *Camillo's Idea of the Theatre in the Frame of the Current Thesis*

This thesis presents research into the works and thought of Giulio Camillo Delminio (ca. 1480- 1544), mainly into his central work, *The Idea of the Theatre*.<sup>1</sup> My first contact with Camillo's ideas was through Frances A. Yates's *The Art of Memory* (1966). The fascination with Yates's contextual description of the Theatre, together with the suggestion of its physical amphitheatrical appearance, grew into a great journey with Camillo. My focus is on understanding the circumstances and resources wherefrom Camillo nurtured his ideas, and on reaching, in my view, the main purpose of his device.

The Theatre was designed to have seven levels divided in seven columns, resulting in a grid of seven times seven fields. Each field had at least one, but often more symbols, visual representations, or images pertaining to the respective field. Behind each image, there should have been placed certain written materials pertaining to the topic, the meaning of which is described with an image.<sup>2</sup> We can summarize the idea of the Theatre as an aid by which, through looking at the archetypal images and reading the materials behind them, one would reach the universal knowledge, widely known as *pansophia* in the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> All the levels,

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<sup>1</sup> The English translation of *The Idea of the Theatre* used in the current thesis is done by Lu Beery Wencker, *An Examination of L'idea del teatro of Giulio Camillo, Including an Annotated Translation, with Special Attention to his Influence on Emblem Literature and Iconography*. Ph. D. Dissertation. Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh, 1970, 187-354. When referring to Wencker's translation, the citation will be the following: Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*. When referring to Wencker's statements, the citation will be the following: Wencker, *An Examination*. When referring Camillo's *Treatise on Imitation*, the English translation used in the current thesis is published by Kate Robinson, *A Search for the Source of the Whirlpool of Artifice: An Exploration of Giulio Camillo's 'idea', through the lens of his writings and contemporaries*. PhD thesis. Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2003, 182-205. When referring to the *Treatise on Imitation*, the citation will be the following: Camillo, *Treatise on Imitation*. When referring to Robinson's statements, the citation will be the following: Robinson, *A search*.

<sup>2</sup> Kate Robinson made a list of sources mentioned by Camillo throughout the Idea of the Theatre. These sources were, I believe, at least partly, the written sources he planned to put behind the images in the Theatre. Robinson, *A Search*, fn. 64, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Paolo Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for a Universal Language*, trans. Stephen Clucas London/New York: Continuum, 2006), xvii.

besides the first one, have symbolic titles. The first, unnamed, level was represented by Sefirot, archangels, the planets, and the anthropomorphic forms of the planets. This level stood for the three worlds, namely supercelestial, celestial, and inferior. The other six levels were named as follows: Banquet (*Il Convivio*), Cave (*L'Antro*), Gorgons (*Le Gorgoni*), Pasiphae (*Pasiphe*), Winged Sandals of Mercury (*I Talari*), and Prometheus (*Prometheo*). Each level had its specific role to represent a step in the creation of the world and humankind. Each column bore a name of a planet and they were placed in the following order: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. Those forty-nine fields were depicted with images mainly from Greco-Roman mythology, with few exceptions. The selection of the symbols is somewhat unusual and indicates the originality of Camillo's approach.

It is uncertain how exactly the physical structure was imagined. Camillo says that there are “doors” (*la porta*) upon each level, adorned with images; thus, we may think of as many cabinets with doors, and the images beneath the doors (*sotto la porta*), that can be opened and closed.<sup>4</sup> Camillo also says that the books behind the doors are in the tubes (*dentro al cannone*),<sup>5</sup> so presumably, the volumes were rolled inside the tubes.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Lina Bolzoni pointed out a curious difference in one of the manuscripts of the same work, namely that in one manuscript it is written that some of the images were carved.<sup>7</sup> Camillo constructed his Theatre,<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 232.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Wenneker interestingly described the Theatre in detail. Wenneker, *An Examination*, 82-93.

<sup>7</sup> Lina Bolzoni, and Giulio Camillo, *L'idea del Theatro con “L'idea dell'Eloquenza”, il “De Transmutatione” e altri testi inediti* (Milano: Adelphi Edizioni S. P. A., 2015), 98. Citation for this edition throughout the thesis will be the following: Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'idea del Theatro*.

<sup>8</sup> Lina Bolzoni leaves the question about the physical appearance of the device open, whether it was in fact a wooden construction, or a book, or a building. Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idea del Theatro*, 125. Corrado Bologna seems more inclined to believe that the theatre was a wooden amphitheatre. Corrado Bologna, “Le retour des dieux anciens : Giulio Camillo et Fontainebleau”, *Italique* [En ligne], V (2002): 121-122.

allegedly as a wooden device,<sup>9</sup> intending to create a great overview of all existing knowledge. The Theatre was imagined “to make scholars into spectators”,<sup>10</sup> but now the spectators would stand in the orchestra, as actors, and instead of an audience, there were the doors with the images beneath. This is just one of Camillo’s reversals of traditional concepts, and the most obvious one.

Camillo’s universal knowledge concerns the genesis of the universe and the world, whereas the Biblical genesis is transformed with the elements from the Kabbalistic angelology, Greek theogony, and the Hermetic and Neoplatonic concepts. The main principle for the order in the Theatre was established through the concept of the Chain of Being, which implies a cause-effect connection from the highest to the lowest things. The genesis of the world is interwoven inextricably with the genesis of man, and the question of the nature of the human soul.

To compile such a huge picture, Camillo carefully chose particular mythological images, characters, and appropriate details, and organized them into a “syntactic” grid using various rhetorical topics as well as figures. He was praised as a great inventor of a new way to facilitate the sciences.<sup>11</sup> He also had great confidence in his lifework:

*“The reason is from knowing that in the great workshop of ‘Teatro’ are disposed through lochi and images all the places necessary to locate and minister to all human concepts, everything in the entire world, not only those pertaining to all sciences and the noble and mechanic arts.”<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> A letter from Viglius Zuichemus to Erasmus (June 8, 1532) contains a description of Camillo's theatre as a wooden structure. See Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, “Giulio Camillo's Emblems of Memory,” *Yale French Studies*, No. 47, *Image and Symbol in the Renaissance* (1972): 47. Bolzoni writes that in one manuscript of the Idea of the Theatre, it is described as circular, reproducing the “most ordered circle”. That perfect circle was the idea behind the Egyptian organization of the days of the week, and linked to planets. Camillo, according to Bolzoni, explains that the images “serve as fixed stars, (...) which act both alone and in the union with the planets.” Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'idea del Teatro*, 99.

<sup>10</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 211.

<sup>11</sup> “Giulio Camillo grand’ inventore di facilitar le scienze con vie nuove (...)” Gian-Giuseppe Liruti. *Notizie delle vite ed opere scritte da’ Letterati del Friuli, Tomo Terzo* (Udine, 1780), 70.

<sup>12</sup> Camillo, *Treatise on Imitation*, 192. See the bibliographical reference in the footnote 1.

My research questions may be formulated as follows:

1. Which concepts circulating in the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries in Northern Italy could be emphasized as formative for Camillo's enterprise?
2. In which way Camillo reinterpreted and employed the traditional concepts relevant to the Theatre?
3. What were philosophical and literary sources and what was, in fact, the specific purpose in the Theatre?

I will examine Camillo's position as a thinker immersed in Neoplatonism, Christian Kabbalism, and Hermeticism. That mainly includes the questions of which points in these streams were used by Camillo and in which way. The thesis places Camillo tightly to the circle of esoteric scholars of the sixteenth century. He was involved in or mingling around different circles, such as a circle around Cardinal Egidio de Viterbo, a prominent exponent of Christian Kabbalah. Camillo's connection with the circle of Egidio is important as a link to Francesco Giorgi (Zorzi). François Secret pointed out that without a doubt, Camillo, who knew Egidio of Viterbo,<sup>13</sup> was familiar with the Kabbalah of Giorgi.<sup>14</sup> I will shed light on several Giorgi's elements from *De harmonia mundi totius* and compare them with elements in Camillo's Theatre.

In experiencing Camillo's Theatre, the human soul could experience the vastness of human knowledge not only from the outside, through learning and memorizing the world of objects, but also from the inside, as if reviewing again the soul's descent from the heavenly

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<sup>13</sup> Both Yates and Bolzoni hinted at the connection of Camillo with the circle of Egidio da Viterbo, of which Giorgi was a member. Frances Amelia Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1999), 149; Lina Bolzoni, "Giulio Camillo's Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah," in *Hebraic aspects of the Renaissance sources and encounters*, ed. Ilana Zinguer, Abraham Melamed, and Zur Shalev (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 19.

<sup>14</sup> François Secret, *I Cabbalisti Cristiani del Rinascimento* (Rome, Arkeios, 2001), 278. Bolzoni added the possible connection with Giorgi through Girolamo Malipiero (ca 1480 – 1547). Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idea del Theatro*, fn. 1, 245.

realms to the sublunar reality on Earth. Ascending is at the same time descending. Thus, the art of memory becomes the art of recalling, and this is the central point of my analysis.

This thesis aims to elucidate further the esoteric side of Camillo's Theatre and to add a piece of a puzzle to the existing scholarship, while the analysis will be far from exhaustive. Yates's *The Art of Memory* was an important step in rekindling the interest in Camillo's work. She dedicated a significant portion of her book to Camillo, as if in dialogue with Paolo Rossi's work *Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for the Universal Language* (1960). Yates elaborated on the historical development and changes in employment of the art of memory, from Antiquity to the Early Modern times. The main ancient models for the rules of mnemonic technique in the Renaissance were read from the works of Cicero, mainly *De oratore*, of Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, and from the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Yates emphasized the connection between the art of memory and the pre-modern categorization of universal knowledge, which was revived in Ramon Lull's *ars combinatoria* and enriched with Lull's Kabbalistic influences.<sup>15</sup> Yates brought useful hints and pointed out the Hermetic and Neoplatonic side of Camillo's Theatre.

Yet, I deem it is important to bring a clearer picture of how Camillo applied these philosophical concepts according to his specific purpose. In my view, there are at least three layers of meaning in Camillo's Theatre. The first one was to facilitate the rhetorical skills of a spectator, in order to deliver efficacious speeches and/or poetry.<sup>16</sup> The second purpose was to categorize universal knowledge in an encyclopedic manner, but in an organic by giving the priority to the soul. And the third one, and in the focus of the current thesis, was to initiate the transformation of the human soul, through recalling its divine origin and creation.

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<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 2.3.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 2.3.

Lina Bolzoni, perhaps currently the most prominent scholar researching Camillo's thoughts and works, began her research about Camillo with the edition of his unpublished work in the article "Eloquenza e alchimia in un testo inedito di Giulio Camillo" in 1974.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the years, Bolzoni invested extraordinary efforts to find paintings and visual representations which are possible examples or even prototypes of the images described in Camillo's Theatre. Furthermore, she researched, discovered, edited, and published the main corpus of Camillo's works,<sup>18</sup> crowned by, to my knowledge, her most recent publication, which included the revised edition of the *Idea of the Theatre*, published in 2015. In this edition, Bolzoni noted several Neoplatonic and Kabbalistic sources, which are fundamental for explaining the employment of Camillo's images in the process of elevation and deification of a human being. These notes, together with Bolzoni's scholarly articles "Giulio Camillo's Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah"<sup>19</sup> and "The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo: Alchemy, Rhetoric, and Deification in the Renaissance,"<sup>20</sup> were important building blocks in my research of Camillo's picturesque ideas of transformative powers in his Theatre. For example, Bolzoni's notes about Proclus' and Porphyry's commentaries on *De antro nympharum.*, which led me to further investigation on Camillo's archetypal imagery.

The concept of the deification of human beings has been largely discussed among traditional and contemporary scholars. It is a long-lasting question of how to understand and

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<sup>17</sup> Lina Bolzoni, "Eloquenza e alchimia in un testo inedito di Giulio Camillo," *Rinascimento* 24 (1974): 243-264.

<sup>18</sup> In 1983 Bolzoni discovered and edited one, until then, unknown work, "L'idea dell'eloquenza. Un'orazione inedita di Giulio Camillo," *Rinascimento*, 2nd series, 23 (1983): 125-166. In the following year Bolzoni published a monography about Camillo entitled *Il teatro della memoria. Studi su Giulio Camillo*. In 1991 she published new edition of *L'idea del Theatre* and in 1995 a book *La stanza della memoria (The Gallery of Memory. Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of Printing)*, translated in 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Lina Bolzoni, "Giulio Camillo's Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah," in *Hebraic aspects of the Renaissance sources and encounters*, ed. Ilana Zinguer, Abraham Melamed, and Zur Shalev (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 14-26.

<sup>20</sup> Lina Bolzoni, "The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo: Alchemy, Rhetoric and Deification in the Renaissance," in: *Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism*, ed. Peter J. Forshaw (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016), 66-80.

explain it. We can often find the term “ascension” in esoteric tradition. For example, Lull’s treatise bears the title *De ascensu et descensu intellectus*.<sup>21</sup> For Recanati the ascension would mean elevation to God, specifically making God through religious actions.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, for Pico it would denote a mystical ascent.<sup>23</sup> Reuchlin defined it as a gradual elevation to divine illumination.<sup>24</sup> The utmost human experience possible in the process of deification, as pointed out by professor György E. Szönyi, could be defined as “exaltatio”, or, “a doctrine according to which man – with the help of certain techniques, including magic – could bring himself into such a state that enables him to leave the body and seek the company of the Deity.”<sup>25</sup> This, continues Szönyi, „mystically elevating state can be achieved through the grace of God, by the efforts of the individual, or by the accidental fortunate circumstances.”<sup>26</sup> The step in the deification that includes leaving the body is present in Camillo’s Theatre, as well as in Pico’s and Agrippa’s elaborations.<sup>27</sup>

Among the growing body of literature concerning the works of Camillo, I will mention the 1970 dissertation by Lu Beery Wencker. Wencker’s exhaustive thesis *An Examination of “L’idea del Teatro” of Giulio Camillo, Including an Annotated Translation, with Special Attention to his Influence on Emblem Literature and Iconography* contains, as announced in the title itself, the annotated English translation of *The Idea of the Theatre*.<sup>28</sup> I used this translation of *The Idea of the Theatre* for the current research. Wencker did highly detailed research

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<sup>21</sup> Ramon Lull, *De ascensu et descensu intellectus* (Palma de Mallorca, 1744).

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 1.3. fn. 142.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 2.1. fn. 179.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 2.2., fn. 209.

<sup>25</sup> György Endre Szönyi, *John Dee’s Occultism. Magical Exaltation through Powerful Signs*, (State University of New York Press, 2004), 34.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 3.4.

<sup>28</sup> See fn. 1.

through Italian archives and libraries, discovering Camillo's close connections and relations to intellectual Renaissance circles in Italy, France, and Switzerland, and we could assume that Camillo's influence might be greater than was previously thought.

The analysis of his *Idea of the Theatre* and related thoughts is challenging given its seminal, encompassing, and interwoven nature. A detailed study of the inspirations and innovative methods of Camillo's Theatre provides a clearer picture of Renaissance Hermetic magical core, as well as the specific forms of syncretism. Furthermore, it provides a better insight concerning what was, from the premodern worldview, included in or excluded from the modern fields of science.

*"From the concept of the chain of being followed another important characteristics of the premodern world model, that is, its supposed organic character. As opposed to the seventeenth-century paradigm in which the world was compared to a machine or a clock, wound up and allowed to run by God, in the late Renaissance the cosmos had been likened to a living organism governed and moved by sympathies, drawn by likeness and analogies."*<sup>29</sup>

It is not out of mere curiosity, I believe, that the transition from theological, magical, or pre-scientific thinking and paradigms, to pure rational and logical-mathematical thinking of modern science, attracts the attention of modern scholars. The overwhelming mechanization of modern science and its reductionism was, seemingly, brewed and took place in that period. In order to get a better understanding of what were the things reduced or rejected from the future scientific world, Camillo's work can provide a very good example. The thesis will bring forth these points in Camillo's thought, namely the priority of deductive method in scientific thinking,<sup>30</sup> searching for the causes to understand the effects,<sup>31</sup> and the hierarchic and

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<sup>29</sup> Szönyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 29-30.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 2.1., fn. 197.

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 2.1. fn. 196.



subordinate order of the universe, yet partially modified.<sup>32</sup> Camillo's ideas, seemingly, did not fit in the development of the modern way of thinking. On the other hand, we might sense the post-modern way of reasoning in Camillo's thought, as he is giving priority to the creation of the soul in the creation of the world. Thus, touching the question of the capacity of the soul and the subjective perception in having an impact on the outer world.<sup>33</sup>

There is still much to discuss on Camillo's work and the interplay between his influence and the influences on him. Into my comparative analysis, I included Francesco Giorgi's *De harmonia mundi totius* in greater detail when exploring Camillo's thoughts. Up to now, Giorgi has been mentioned as having certain similarities to the ideas of Camillo. This thesis will bring to the surface more examples of similarity between the two authors, in the footsteps of Lina Bolzoni, who has already initiated this thorny path. A few of my observations will hopefully encourage future scholarship to inspect these connections to an even greater degree.

Furthermore, the thesis advocates that Camillo's Theatre was not, on the esoteric level, the Art of Memory as suggested by Yates, but rather the Art of Recalling,<sup>34</sup> which I interpret here as the method for the soul to recall the descension from the heavenly realms to the earthly world. The purpose of recalling would be to attain the ability to ascend again, regain the universal knowledge and translate the heavenly experiences to the earthly life. This concept will be based on the theory of the preexistence of the soul and its immortality. I particularly focused on the *loci* in the Theatre dealing with the soul and marked the centrally positioned keys for the soul's journey from and to their original divine habitat.

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<sup>32</sup> See Chapter 2.1., fn 202., and Chapter 3, fn. 287.

<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 1.1., fn 88.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. "Ars reminiscendi" in Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, 74.

### *Camillo's curriculum vitae*

Camillo had developed his ideas in Northern Italy in the early sixteenth century. He started his career as an enthusiastic and ambitious teacher of dialectic and rhetoric. In the vivid world of the Christian, Neoplatonic, Hermetic, and Kabbalist thinkers and artists of the sixteenth century, Camillo invested unique energy to construct his grandiose idea that aimed to encompass all the knowledge in the most approachable way. This attempt was based on previous encyclopedic attempts, as well as known elements of the rhetorical legacy, such as the art of memory. On the other hand, access to universal knowledge was also promised by the ascension of the human soul to its primordial source.

Camillo's *Idea of the Theatre* was the result of a forty-year effort.<sup>35</sup> In this long period of time, Camillo had the opportunity to develop, change, improve and polish his final version, not necessarily of the written version, but for sure of his idea. It is challenging to determine what was the initiating step in the development of Camillo's ideas: the pragmatic systematization of rhetorical procedures together with the literary collection of the best choices used by canonical writers, wrapped in the emblematic form, in order to construct or reconstruct universal language and knowledge; or the esoteric revelation covered with talismans to enhance new dignity of man through syncretic, but a particular type of deification, by evoking soul's descend from havens. Yet, it seems certain that Camillo encompassed both in his Theatre.

Giulio Camillo enjoyed fame during his lifetime evidenced by the support of the French king Francis I and Alfonso d'Avalos, the Marchese del Vasto (1502-1546). Despite fame and regal support during his lifetime, Camillo's works were not published until six years after his death, in 1550.<sup>36</sup> April that year was marked with the publication of Camillo's main work,

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<sup>35</sup> Johann Sturm, *Linguae Latinae resolvendae ratio* (Stasbourg, 1581), 4.

<sup>36</sup> The reason might partly be that Camillo had promised to the king not to reveal the secrets of the Theatre, and the king died in 1547. Wenneker, *An Examination*, 19, 94-95.

*L'Idea del Theatro* in Florence (Lorenzo Torrentino, ed. Lodovico Domenichi). The ideas developed by Camillo were to such extent recognized as significant, that they even influenced the printing of his work. Lu Beery Wenneker interestingly observes that the Venetian publisher, Baldassar Costantini, hastened to reprint the *L'Idea del Theatro* in August 1550, soon after the Florentine *editio princeps*, not to miss the Jubilee year, which is explicitly said in the *impressum* ("l'anno del Giubileo M.D.L."). The Jubilee, which marks a year after seven times seven years, originates in Hebrew tradition (Lev. 25, 8-10) and was adopted by and celebrated in the Christian tradition. Wenneker suggested that since Camillo's Theatre was formed in the same manner, seven times seven, to the knowledgeable and initiated reader of the time this year would be highly auspicious.<sup>37</sup> The seven times seven grid of the Theatre will be discussed further in the current research.

Camillo was called divine and praised as a highly educated person.<sup>38</sup> Francesco Patrizi, "the enthusiastic publisher of Camillo's *Topica*" praised, as pointed out by professor Lina Bolzoni, Camillo "as the man who breached the ancient boundaries of rhetoric and gave it a new, universal dimension: 'he expanded it in such a way that it has been extended throughout all the places of the theatre of the world'."<sup>39</sup> Ariosto and Tasso made remarks about Camillo as well, due to his "quick and easy way to teach secrets of fine writing."<sup>40</sup> He was included in the list of noblemen and princes in the last canto of *Orlando Furioso*, "with him, by whom through

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>38</sup> Francesco Patrizi, in the foreword to the second volume of Camillo's *Tutte l'Opere*, Il secondo tomo dell'Opere di M. Giulio Camillo Delminio, cioè, *La Topica, ouero dell'Elocutione, Discorso sopra l'Idee di Hermogene, La Grammatica. Espositione sopra il primo e secondo Sonetto del Petrarca* (Venice, 1566) called Camillo "divin", "altissima mente", 3; and "un genio con ardor inestimabile", "egli nondimeno infinite cose inventò con la forza del suo altissimo intelletto", 73-74.

<sup>39</sup> Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory: Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press*, trans. Jeremy Parzen (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 51.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., xvi.

shorter pathway we are led to the Ascræan font divine, Julio Camillo.”<sup>41</sup> Ascræan refers to the ancient Greek poet Hesiod, the author of *Theogony*, who wrote about the origin of the world and gods. Therefore, Lodovico Ariosto might have thought of Camillo's Theatre as a shortcut to the understanding of the creation of the world, a pathway to the knowledge of the first causes. Torquato Tasso, as reported by Frances Yates, said that: “Camillo was the first since Dante who showed that rhetoric is a kind of poetry.”<sup>42</sup> Yates concluded, “To find Ariosto and Tasso among the hosts of Camillo's admirers forbids us to dismiss the Theatre as historically unimportant.”<sup>43</sup>

The three most extensive biographical accounts of Camillo's life and work are from the eighteenth century, more than two hundred years after his death. The first was written by Federigo Altan di Salvarolo, entitled *Memorie intorno alla vita, ed all'Opere di Giulio Camillo Delminio*,<sup>44</sup> the second by Gian-Giuseppe Liruti in *Notizie delle vite ed opere scritte da Letterati del Friuli*,<sup>45</sup> and third by Girolamo Tiraboschi in *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*.<sup>46</sup> Most of the information in these three accounts is based on Camillo's correspondences, even though, after close comparative reading of the letters published in the *Opere* by Lu Beery Wenneker, certain inaccuracies were observed.<sup>47</sup> Camillo's date and place of birth, according to these sources, is not certain. He was born around 1480 in the region of Friuli, possibly Portogruaro or Udine, or in the Castle of Zoppola.<sup>48</sup> Francesco Patrizi, in the dedication to the second

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<sup>41</sup> Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* 46,12, 5-7. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/615/pg615-images.html>. See also Lina Bolzoni, “The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo: Alchemy, Rhetoric and Deification in the Renaissance,” 66-67.

<sup>42</sup> Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 169.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> In *Nuova raccolta d'opusculi Scientifici e filologici. Tomo Primo*, ed. Angelo Calogierà (Venice 1755), 239-288.

<sup>45</sup> Liruti. *Notizie*, 69-134.

<sup>46</sup> Girolamo Tiraboschi. *Storia Della Letteratura Italiana, Tomo VII, Parte IV* (Florence, 1812), 1513-1525.

<sup>47</sup> Wenneker. *An examination*, 16.

<sup>48</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'idea del Theatro*, 10.

volume of Camillo's *Tutte l'Opere*, wrote that Camillo took the surname Delminio since it was the name of the ancient city in Dalmatia,<sup>49</sup> from where his father originated.<sup>50</sup> Camillo had studied philosophy and jurisprudence at the University of Padua<sup>51</sup> and in his later years, he, presumably, held a chair of Dialectics at the University of Bologna (probably 1521-1525). He started to develop the idea of the Theatre well before 1530 when he departed to France with Count Claudio Rangone and his friend Girolamo Muzio (1496-1576)<sup>52</sup> to meet the French king, Francis I.<sup>53</sup> The king was impressed by Camillo's ideas and became his financial supporter, under the condition that Camillo would not reveal or publish his "secrets" unless the king approved it.

From at least 1530 until around 1535 Camillo was a regular guest at the court of Francis I. During this period and in 1537, according to his correspondence with Pietro Aretino, he was often ill, and his work was not finished. King Francis I withdrew his support and Camillo stopped his visits to France.<sup>54</sup> In 1543, Camillo broke his promise to the king. Camillo, by Muzio's mediation, arranged a meeting with Alfonso d'Avalos, the Marchese del Vasto,<sup>55</sup> in

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<sup>49</sup> Delminium was a city which is today Tomislavgrad in Bosnia and Hercegovina, previously called Duvno. Ljerka Šifler-Premec. "Giulio Camillo Delminio: Ličnost i djelo" ["Giulio Camillo Delmino: Person and work"], *Prilozi za istraživanje hrvatske filozofske baštine*, Vol.6. No.11-12 (1980), 133.

<sup>50</sup> Giulio Camillo, *Il secondo tomo dell' Opere* (Venice, 1566), 73-76. Francesco Patrizi (in Croatian Frane Petrić) motivation to indicate Camillo's Dalmatian origin is probably rooted in his own Croatian origin.

<sup>51</sup> Kate Robinson suggested that Camillo might have had acquaintance with Copernicus during his stays at Bologna and Padua. Robinson, *A Search*, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Wenneker, *An Examination*, 17-18. Muzio was "a minor courtier of sorts to various noblemen, among them the Dukes of Ferrara and Urbino, the Marchese del Vasto, and, at one time, Maximilian I." Ibid., 18.

<sup>53</sup> Corrado Bologna suggested that the first visit might have been even earlier than 1530, Bologna, "Le retour des dieux anciens," 121.

<sup>54</sup> Wenneker, *An Examination*, 19-20.

<sup>55</sup> The Marchese was Spanish governor in Milan and the commandor of the armies of Charles V in Italy. In a biographical entry brought out by Wenneker, he was cruel and perfidious, and "had the agent of Francis I assassinated after concluding a treaty of alliance between France and Portugal." In 1544 he was defeated at Ceresole by Duc d'Enghein and he had fled from the battle, for which he had lost the sympathies of the people of Milan. "He was patron of the arts, and at various times employed Pietro Aretino and Ariosto." Titian made several his portraits. Wenneker suggested that the interest in Camillo's work might have been motivated by political reason against Francis I. Ibid., 22-23.

Milan. D'Avalos was extremely interested in the Theatre<sup>56</sup> and became Camillo's new financier, after the meeting which took place before February 1544.<sup>57</sup> Camillo held oral sessions to d'Avalos for several days, most probably for seven days, in the early mornings while d'Avalos was still in bed.<sup>58</sup> Later he dictated the work to Muzio.<sup>59</sup> Soon after, on May 15, 1544, Camillo died in Milan and was buried in the Church of Santa Maria della Grazie.<sup>60</sup>

Camillo's fame resounded strongly towards the end of the century which can also be observed in the prosaic note following the poem written by Giovanni Matteo Toscano (1500-1576) in his *Peplus Italiae*, in Paris 1578, in which Giulio Camillo is described as the "most learned in Hebrew and all Oriental languages".<sup>61</sup> Camillo, according to Toscano, "carefully examined the innermost hidden secrets of universal philosophy; with the greatest zeal, he successfully reached the most mystical Hebrew traditions, which they call Kabbala, and the entirety of the Egyptian, the Pythagorean, and the Platonic doctrines. He entirely grasped the words and rules of all arts and sciences."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Muzio in his letter to M. Domenico Tenieri wrote that the Marchese, even though Muzio warned him about the skepticism and negativity of some scholars towards Camillo's Theatre, replied: "Genuine or not I want it." Ibid., 20.

<sup>57</sup> Wenneker suggested that the meeting was held at the end of the 1539, although Liruti, according to her, said that Camillo had visited the Marchese in more occasions between 1539 and 1543. Ibid., 21.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>59</sup> "This he did, the two men reclining on adjoining beds in the same room, for seven mornings from dawn well into the day, Camillo dictating and Muzio writing." Ibid., 25. For both seven days sessions being held while reclining in bed, Wenneker suggested that Camillo arranged it on purpose, having in mind the "lectulum Salomonis", "bed of wisdom". Ibid., 27.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Giovanni Matteo Toscano, *Peplus Italiae*, (Paris, 1578), 85-86.

<sup>62</sup> "Julius Camillus Hebraicae, omniumque Orientalium linguarum peritissimus, universae Philosophiae penitissimos recessus accurate perlustravit; Haebreorum Mysticas Traditiones, quas Cabalam vocant, Aegyptiorum, Pythagoreorum, Platonicorum universa Dogmata summo studio felicissime assecutus. Omnium omnino Artium, et scientiarum Vocabula et praecepta portentoso opere (complexus est)" Ibid. The same passage reported also in Liruti, *Notizie*, 74-75.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter aims to inspect which were the main events, and philosophical and religious streams in Northern Italy in the fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries, which influenced the development of Camillo's thought in his contemporary context. I shall focus on several points, within these streams, which are directly connected with Camillo's work. These points include: 1) the Florentine revival of Neoplatonism, in the frame of which I pay special attention to the concept of celestial influences; 2) the rediscovery of Hermeticism, with the focus on the relations between microcosm and macrocosm; and 3) Kabbalah, with the focus on the concept of Sefirot and the threefold division of the world as it occurs in the Christian Kabbalism. In the second chapter, I try to expose Camillo's application and his original adaptation of these philosophical and religious concepts. This will mainly involve Camillo's reinterpretation of the concept of deification, which includes the search for the key to reaching universal knowledge, and the art of recalling as esoterically transformed art of memory. The third chapter will present a detailed examination of Camillo's images which deal with the soul and its transmutation. I will examine Camillo's formative literary and philosophical sources in the development of each level. They will include works of Porphyry, Macrobius, and Proclus, as well as my comparisons of Camillo mainly with Pico della Mirandola, Francesco Giorgi, and Henry Cornelius Agrippa. The third chapter I see as my main contribution to the scholarly examination of Camillo's ideas. My research aims to affirm that Camillo's Theatre, on an esoteric level, should be understood as the Art of Recalling.

The syncretic nature of Camillo's work makes the dissection and analysis of his mindset challenging. Yet, Camillo provides a gold mine for scholars interested in understanding this key timeframe and the whirlpool of ideas that swept throughout this period.

## CHAPTER 1: OUTLINE OF NEOPLATONIC, HERMETIC, AND KABBALIST

### CONCEPTS THAT HAD IMPACTED CAMILLO'S WORK

Giulio Camillo Delminio lived in a time period that was a crossroad and a core of Renaissance intellectual, as well as religious transformations. At that time Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) founded Christian Kabbalah, and one generation earlier Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) translated a whole range of Neoplatonic and Hermetic works. Camillo was contemporary to such great representatives of Renaissance scholarship and magic, such as Henry Cornelius Agrippa (1486-c.1535), Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), or Francesco Giorgi (1466- 1540). This chapter briefly outlines the main events and philosophical streams of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century Northern Italy, regarding their influence and possible impact on Giulio Camillo's esoteric side of the work.

Frances A. Yates in her Diary<sup>63</sup> proposed that Renaissance should be divided into two periods, which overlap and, in a way, diverge from one another. The two proposed periods are distinguished based on differences in their focus of interest. Yates' division into the two streams might be useful for better clarity in understanding Camillo's position. The first, humanistic stream, as Yates suggested, should be from Petrarch until the second part of the sixteenth century. The second proposed period starts in 1463, when Ficino translated Hermetic texts, with the culmination of that stream being in 1600, when Bruno the Hermetic Magus died. Scholars inspired by Ficino's works can also be understood "as offering an alternative conception of the foundations of the physical world."<sup>64</sup>

*"The first period was to be placed under the sign of reason and classical Greek and Roman humanism; the second under the sign of ancient Egypt, or Hermetic mysticism and magic. The*

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<sup>63</sup> Hilary Gatti, "Frances Yates's Hermetic Renaissance in the Documents Held in the Warburg Institute Archive," *Aries* Vol. 2, no.2. (2002): 199-200

<sup>64</sup> Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston, *The Cambridge History of Science. Vol. 3, Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 33.



*triumphant emergence of enlightened reason, and with it of the mechanical sciences, in the seventeenth century was regarded by Yates with mixed feelings.*"<sup>65</sup>

Therefore, the timelines of these two periods overlap in the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, when mainly due to Ficino's translations, Pico's Kabbalistic efforts, and with the background of the Graeco-Roman classical humanism, we find the zenith of syncretic scholarly activity. György E. Szőnyi emphasized that the magic, which went through significant changes in the sixteenth century, was incorporated into the development of the Scientific Revolution. According to Szőnyi, this period of transition from "the organic to the new mechanical world-picture can be dated from the 1510s to Newton's synthesis at the end of the seventeenth century."<sup>66</sup>

Camillo's multi-layered project on the one hand connects him to humanists of the time in sense of rhetoric, eloquence, logic, mnemonic techniques, and poetry,<sup>67</sup> and on the other puts him into companionship with the second stream, Hermetists, Neoplatonists, and Kabbalists. "In Camillo's work, the use of images in the art of memory was linked to the ancient magical-alchemical theme of a secret knowledge."<sup>68</sup> Multiple influences were crucial in shaping this specific Renaissance philosophical mindset, and these can be pin-pointed as 1) revival of Neoplatonism, 2) rediscovery of Hermeticism, 3) reinterpretation of Kabbalah. Based on these three movements, Renaissance scholars attempted to improve the scientific approach and to deepen their understanding of humankind's earthly and heavenly position and abilities.

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<sup>65</sup>Hilary Gatti, "Frances Yates's Hermetic Renaissance," 199-200.

<sup>66</sup>György Endre Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 104.

<sup>67</sup> Cf., "Muzio speaks of Camillo's demonstrating the theatre's mnemotechnic qualities by taking a sonnet written by Marchese to Muzio, translating it into Latin, and then breaking it down by the 'Ciceronian technique,' sentence by sentence and word by word, and placing it in the Theatre (...)." Wenneker, *An Examination*, 24.

<sup>68</sup> Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, 74. Cf. Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory*, 245.

### 1.1. Revival of Neoplatonism

The event that made it possible for Ficino to translate<sup>69</sup> the great amount of Platonic, Neoplatonic and Hermetic texts was the Ecumenical Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1449). In 1437-8 a delegation, led by Nicolaus of Cusa (1401-1464),<sup>70</sup> was sent to Constantinople to bring the Byzantine emperor, the leading Greek scholars and theologians to the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1439).<sup>71</sup> Among the Greek scholars attending the Council of Ferrara-Florence, there was Gemistus Plethon (1360-1452), accompanied by Basil Bessarion (1403-1472). “Importantly, Bessarion was in touch with leading Italian intellectuals, and played a crucial part in the spread of Platonism in the Renaissance.”<sup>72</sup> The Council of Ferrara-Florence has a significant place in further understanding of the rise of the scholarly interest and proliferation of Platonic and Neoplatonic writings in Italy at the time; in addition to being directly connected and influencing Ficino to found the *Accademia Platonica* in Florence. Ficino, in the Prologue to Plotinus (1492)<sup>73</sup> praised Plethon as the primary source of the idea for founding the Florentine Academy. He said that Cosimo de’ Medici was so impressed by Plethon’s speech at the Council of Florence, that he assigned Ficino to establish the Academy in Florence:

*“Cosimo the Great, by decree of the Senate known as the Father of the Country, when during the Pontificate of Eugenius, the Council for the unification of the Greek with the Latin Church*

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<sup>69</sup> Additionally, the arrival of Manuel Chrysoloras in 1397 to Florence, to teach Greek, “led to a deep knowledge and love of the Greek classical tradition (...).” Joseph Gill, *Council of Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 18.

<sup>70</sup> Nicolaus Cusanus “in 1437 brought from Constantinople the manuscript of the Platonic Theology, commissioning later Pietro Balbi, a member of Bessarion’s circle, to make a Latin translation (which was only finished in 1460s).” Radek Chlup, *Proclus: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 282-283.

<sup>71</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2000), 15.

<sup>72</sup> Bessarion moved to Italy, and Pope Eugene IV made him a cardinal in 1439. Chlup, *Proclus: An Introduction*, 282.

<sup>73</sup> It should be noted, though, that the two manuscripts of Plotinus’ *Enneades* were already in Florence at the beginning of the fifteenth century, in the collections of the first two collectors of Greek manuscripts, Giovanni Aurispa and Palla Strozzi. In 1423, Aurispa came back from Constantinople with 238 Greek books. Strozzi “was given the Plotinus manuscript by his Greek master, Manuel Chrysoloras, whom Coluccio Salutati had called to Florence in 1397 in order to appoint him as the first teacher of Greek.” Henri D. Saffrey, “Florence, 1492: The Reappearance of Plotinus,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (1996): 489.

*was held in Florence, was frequently present at the discussions on Platonic mysteries that the Greek philosopher named Gemistos, whose surname was Pletho, almost as a second Plato, was delivering. Cosimo was so much inspired by the words of Pletho that he conceived in his mind an academy that could be established as soon as an opportunity were to present itself. Then... he assigned me.... to that great responsibility.*"<sup>74</sup>

Gemistus Plethon upon his arrival to Italy (1438-39) brought a manuscript of Plato, and Cosimo de' Medici purchased it. It was, as Henri Saffrey pointed out, the only "Greek manuscript of Plato containing the whole series of dialogues to be found in Italy."<sup>75</sup> Cosimo de' Medici provided young Ficino with the Greek texts of Plato and Plotinus more than twenty years after Plethon's speech at the Council, and in 1462<sup>76</sup> assigned Ficino to translate *Hermetica* and Plato's works.<sup>77</sup>

Ficino's translations and works inspired a growing circle of scholars to rethink various medieval concepts, such as human position in the world and their relations with the whole universe. One of the questions was about the influences of planetary bodies over human life and destiny. It was not unusual for erudite scholars of the Medieval period, such as Thomas Aquinas or Roger Bacon, to admit the influence of the celestial bodies over human life.<sup>78</sup> However, even if the celestial bodies have influences over humans, the question was about to what degree humans have the power to direct these influences or to gain power over them,

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<sup>74</sup> Eugenio Garin, *History of Italian Philosophy*, Vol. 1., trans. Giorgio Pinton, (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2008), 219.

<sup>75</sup> Saffrey, "Florence, 1492: The Reappearance of Plotinus", 494.

<sup>76</sup> Henri D. Saffrey states that in 1453 Cosimo had the Plotinus manuscript bound, and in 1460 he had it copied by the Greek scholar Johannes Scutariotes. The original manuscript, which was copied, has a few corrections made by Ficino, and from that we can conclude that Ficino has started his study of Plotinus before 1460. See in: Saffrey, "Florence, 1492: The Reappearance of Plotinus", 491. Cf. Daniel Pickering Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 62.

<sup>77</sup> Ficino published the translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in 1463, Plato's *Symposium* in 1469, complete Plato's works with commentary in 1484. In the same time he was working on translations of Neoplatonist writers, such as Iamblichus, Porphyry, Proclus, Psellus and Plotinus. The complete Plotinus' works were published in 1492. The Pseudo-Dionysius' works were published in 1496. György E. Szönyi, "The Hermetic Revival in Italy," in *The Occult World*, ed. Christopher Partridge (London: Routledge, 2014), 52, 56.

<sup>78</sup> Lynn Thorndike, *Place of Magic in the Intellectual History of Europe* (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1905), 13 and 18.

especially through the concept of free will. The celestial bodies, according to Thorndike's understanding of Roger Bacon's thoughts, were granted the ability to affect human health and character. They "implant" good or bad "dispositions", while "human free will may either better these innate tendencies through God's grace or modify them for the worse by yielding to Satan's temptings (...)." <sup>79</sup>

This possibility to capture or govern the celestial influences was looked upon and investigated later by the well-known scholars in the Renaissance, such as Ficino, Pico, Reuchlin, Agrippa, Trithemius and Paracelsus, <sup>80</sup> and, based on the evidence in *The Idea of the Theatre* and other Camillo's works, by Giulio Camillo as well. The powers of the planetary bodies were emphasized and elaborated by Ficino as well, who claimed the authority of the ancient philosophies:

*"For since they [the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Platonists] believe the celestials are not empty bodies, but bodies divinely animated and ruled moreover by divine Intelligences, no wonder they believe that as many good things as possible come forth from thence for men, goods pertaining not only to our body and spirit but also overflowing somewhat into our soul, and not into our soul from their bodies but from their souls. And they believe too that the same sort of things and more of them flow out from those Intelligences which are above the heavens."* <sup>81</sup>

Ramon Lull, in the *De ascensu et descensu*, argues that planets can be, in fact, good or bad, and that it affects the natural inclinations of people born under certain constellation, but adding that, due to free will, one "naturaliter" can be good or bad, but chooses to be one of the two in the manner of "moraliter", because "the way of behaviour is depending on the rational

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, ed. and trans. Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark (Medieval & Renaissance Texts & studies in conjunction with The Renaissance society of America. Tempe, Arizona, 1998), 3.XXII, 367.

soul, who is free.”<sup>82</sup> Camillo’s imagery may be understood as employed to direct the influxes of planetary bodies.

The question arises can we think of Camillo’s images as, in fact, “talismans,”<sup>83</sup> which would be used to attract or advert the celestial influences. Yates, for example, included Camillo among the magicians who used talismans.<sup>84</sup> “The talismanic, magical view of arts was,” Yates believed, “present from the start of the influence of Neoplatonism, in Ficino’s magical theories applied to talismans,”<sup>85</sup> applied by Camillo to memory images in his theatre, expounded by Agrippa in his *De occulta philosophia* (which is based on Ficino and Pico)<sup>86</sup> Yates said that “the magical conception of art includes the application of the astral psychology to the formation of magical, or talismanic, images in art, designed to influence the beholder through a kind of sympathetic magic.”<sup>87</sup>

It seems reasonable that, due to Camillo’s belief that the whole universe is interconnected, and that the influences flow from above down to all aspects of human life, Camillo intended to provide an initiate with, so to say, recalling tools that would, by the means of “talismanic” pictures, words, phrases and formulas, have wonder-making effects. These

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<sup>82</sup> “Dum sic intellectus considerat quaerit Utrum puer natus in tali constellatione debeat esse bonus, aut malus? Et tunc intellectus ipse descendit ad Jovem, et Saturnum, qui sunt in illa constellatione, et Saturnus est malus, et Jupiter bonus, et aries magis convenit cum Jove, quam cum Saturno; et Aries est dominus in ipsa constellatione: sequitur quod ipse puer magis debet esse bonus, quam malus naturaliter; et non moraliter, quoniam mores pertinent ad Animam rationalem, quae libera est.” Ramon Lull, *De ascensu et descensu intellectus*, 205-206. Paraphrased by J. Uremovic.

<sup>83</sup> Corrado Bologna, in order to make space for Camillo in the historical context, defined the images of gods and heroes in the Schifanoia Palace in Ferrara as having the properties of “psycho-cultural talismans”. The purpose of these images, Bologna stated, was not only aesthetical or cultural, but also transformative. Thus, an image having the purpose or intention, and power to transform one’s spiritual state, would be defined as a talisman. Bologna, “Le retour des dieux anciens”, 114.

<sup>84</sup> Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 154.

<sup>85</sup> To this it might not be useless to point out the interest in Egyptian hieroglyphs as well. According to Radcliff-Umstead, Ficino believed that hieroglyphs are “a sacred form of writing which enabled the human intellect to glimpse divine ideas behind symbolic pictures.” Radcliff-Umstead, “Giulio Camillo’s Emblems of Memory,” 48.

<sup>86</sup> Frances Amelia Yates, *Collected Essays: Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance*, Vol. III (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 199.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

effects would be two-layered. First, an initiate would, as a spectator, experience transformation. The second, after their interior transformation, they would be enabled to, as a miraculous effect, influence or transform the exterior world.<sup>88</sup> It seems that Camillo had seen the clusters of words, and the words and letters themselves, as powerful instruments which we were given by the Creator, and that they are, therefore, soaked with the divine power. Camillo, it seems, expected from anyone engaged in his divine method, to restore their perfection on an individual level, and fulfill their unique creative potential. This ought to be possible through the archetypal images as “talismans”, which were supposed to incite memory and associations in each individual, according to their knowledge, experiences, and the influences of the heavenly bodies. These “talismans”, according to Bolzoni, presumably had an inner ability of reactivation of their powers in the human mind.<sup>89</sup>

Camillo imagined, I would say, the Theatre as a mosaic, built on the set of rules that are inherent to the web of the world. Thus, a person could experience these rules by applying them to their own creation.

## 1.2. Rediscovery of Hermeticism

Another event, important for the current study, which took place shortly after the end of the Council at Florence, in 1453, was the fall of Constantinople. The fall brought to Italy a number of Byzantine scholars and monks who brought with them various Greek manuscripts. It seems that subsequently, or consequently to this event, in 1460 “a monk from Macedonia had brought the manuscripts of *Corpus Hermeticum* to Prince Cosimo.”<sup>90</sup> Szönyi pointed out the

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<sup>88</sup> Transformation for Camillo was a capacity of the soul. In the *Discorso in materia del suo teatro* (1532) he wrote that “Avicenna’s conclusions in the sixth book on nature are very appealing to me, where he says that there is a certain capacity in our soul to change things and to make them obey us, while our soul is attracted by a great affection for them.” Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory*, 139.

<sup>89</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’idea del Teatro*, 20.

<sup>90</sup>Szönyi, *John Dee’s Occultism*, 43.

great importance and fame that *Corpus Hermeticum* enjoyed in Medici's court, due to which the old Cosimo de' Medici ordered Ficino to suspend the translation of Plato in order to as quickly as possible deliver the translation of the newly arrived text.<sup>91</sup> The *Corpus Hermeticum*, comprised of fourteen treatises and was published in 1471. Ficino titled it with the title of the first treatise, *Poimandres*, Pimander.<sup>92</sup> Before Ficino's translations, certain Hermetic texts and fragments were available, such as the *Emerald Tablet*, and the Latin translation of *Asclepius*.<sup>93</sup>

The *Corpus Hermeticum* was supposedly written by Hermes Trismegistus, "a mythical Egyptian sage whom the Florentines believed to represent an ancient wisdom which was the remote source of Plato himself."<sup>94</sup> Hermes Trismegistus was seen as an ancient prophet of Christianity,<sup>95</sup> and this syncretism encouraged the intellectual elite of the time to search for a renewed and deeper understanding of the genesis of the universe and the real, divine nature of humankind. Hermeticism fostered the idea of the human being as "a great wonder", who does not need to, like a passive subject, endure or enjoy upon themselves the influences from above, but rather has the ability, power, and divine dignity to make substantial use of the influences, and can change their nature to that of God.<sup>96</sup> An important Hermetic aspect of a human becoming God, or deification, was immortality of the soul. A way to reach that stage is to immerse oneself into the divine mind, and consequently participate in the divine knowledge:

*"He [God] filled a great mixing bowl with it and sent it below, appointing a herald with whom he commanded to make the following proclamation to human hearts: "Immerse yourself in the mixing bowl if your heart has the strength, if it believes you will rise up again to the one who sent the mixing bowl below, if it recognizes the purpose of your coming to be".*

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>93</sup> "Thus, the Asclepius that we know in Latin existed before the early fifth but after the early fourth century, (...)" 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, 1996), xliii.

<sup>94</sup> Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), 19.

<sup>95</sup> Yates, *Collected Essays*, 265.

<sup>96</sup> Szönyi, "The Hermetic Revival in Italy," 54. Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, *Asclepius* 6, 69-70.

*“All those who heeded the proclamation and immersed themselves in mind participated in knowledge and became perfect people because they received mind. But those who missed the point of the proclamation are people of reason because they did not receive (the gift of) mind as well and do not know the purpose of the agents of their coming to be. These people have sensations much like those of unreasoning animals, and, since their temperament is willful and angry, they feel no awe of things that deserve to be admired; they divert their attention to the pleasures and appetites of their bodies; and they believe that mankind came to be for such purposes. But those who participate in the gift that comes from god, O Tat, are immortal rather than mortal if one compares their deeds, for in mind of their own they have comprehended all – things on earth, things in heaven and even what lies beyond heaven. Having raised themselves so far, they have seen the good and, having seen it, they have come to regard the wasting of time here below as a calamity. They have scorned every corporeal and incorporeal thing, and they hasten toward the one and only. This, Tat, is the way to learn about mind, to (resolve perplexities) in divinity and to understand god. For the mixing bowl is divine.”<sup>97</sup>*

It was believed that Hermes Trismegistus lived at the same time as Moses, or even before the latter one. The two authorities were in line with other ancient authorities, the *prisci theologi*.<sup>98</sup> The assumption that Hermes lived in the time of Moses provided *Corpus Hermeticum* with “a sanctity almost equal to that of Genesis, supposedly written by Moses.”<sup>99</sup> The Renaissance syncretists used the *prisca theologia* to connect Platonism with Christianity (Plato with Moses, Timaeus with Genesis). D. P. Walker suggested the following branches of the Renaissance approach to the ancient wisdom: 1) there was a pre-Christian partial revelation, from another source than one deriving from Jewish tradition, “and/or a continuous tradition of divine knowledge deriving ultimately from pre-lapsarian Adam;”<sup>100</sup> or 2) that there was only one pre-Christian revelation, the Jewish one, that was transmitted through Moses, who was a teacher to Egyptian priests.<sup>101</sup>

Pico put the greatest theological and philosophical efforts to prove that the ancient wisdom, *prisca theologia*, was attesting to the truth revealed in the Bible. The common feature

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<sup>97</sup> Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, C.H., IV.4-6, 15-16.

<sup>98</sup> *Prisci theologi* were “(Adam, Abraham), Zoroaster, Moses, Hermes Trismegistus, (The Druids), Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato (...)” and the line continues with Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonists (Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus). Daniel Pickering Walker, “Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 16, No. 1/2, (1953): 105.

<sup>99</sup> Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 20.

<sup>100</sup> Walker, “Orpheus the Theologian”, 105.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*



was that the truth was veiled in fables, myths and enigmas, and all religious texts should be treated as such and interpreted allegorically.<sup>102</sup> The instruction to conceal the truth in mysteries, in order to stay hidden from the profane who would misuse it, was followed by Camillo as well.

As Camillo formulated in the opening sentence of his *Idea of the Theatre*:

*“The oldest and wisest writers always have had the habits of protecting in their writings the secrets of God with dark veils, so that they are understood only by those, who (as Christ says) ‘have ears to hear’, that is, those who are chosen by God to understand His most holy mysteries.”*<sup>103</sup>

*“In ancient times then, it was the custom that these same philosophers who were teaching and proving profound doctrines to their beloved disciples, since they had clearly explained them, covered them with a fable, so that thus covered, they were hidden, and thus were not profaned. Which custom reaches even to the time of Vergil, (....).”*<sup>104</sup>

Thus, Camillo continues “We use symbols in our own affairs, as signifying those things that should not be desecrated.”<sup>105</sup>

During Renaissance in Italy, when Plato’s theology became widely known and studied, Jewish scholars were eager to emphasize that Plato studied in Egypt with Jeremiah and that there he received his knowledge from the famous prophet.

*“Instead of allowing for two independent sources of knowledge, the Mosaic and the Greek or pagan, as happened in many cases in the Florentine Renaissance, the Jewish intelligentsia preferred to stress that truth stemmed ultimately from the Mosaic revelation, and that it had been subsequently accepted by Plato but distorted by Aristotle.”*<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Walker, “Orpheus the Theologian,” 106. Cf. Also First Proem of *Heptaplus*, Pico della Mirnadola, *On the Dignity of Man*, trans. Charles Glenn Wallis, Paul J. W. Miller, Douglas Carmichael. Introduction by Paul J. W. Miller. (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1998) , 68-69. The *On the Dignity of Man* includes three Pico’s treatises, *On the Dignity of Man*, translated by Wallis, *On Being and the One*, translated by Miller, and *Heptaplus*, translated by Carmichael. If not specified differently, the three treatises from this book and in these translations will be cited separately.

<sup>103</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 197.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 305.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>106</sup> Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy 1280-1510: A Survey* (Yale University Press, New Heaven & London, 2011), 168.

R. Isaac ben Yehudah Abravanel (1437-1508), a philosopher educated both in the medieval philosophical frame<sup>107</sup> and the Kabbalah, traced the origin of Judaism, and then of the *prisca theologia* too, to Adam, which enforced the universal scope of the tradition. In that sense, Jewish tradition had the role of preserving the ancient sacred tradition deriving and originating from Adam.<sup>108</sup> Abravanel, according to Idel, in his treatise about the creation of the world, *Mif'alot 'Elohim* (1498, Italy), explains the connections between Hermes Trismegistus (whom he calls Hanoch and Egyptian Enoch), Plato and Pythagoras, and demonstrates the correlations between Jewish and Hermetic traditions.

*“According to the divine truth all human souls were created before bodies came into existence at the genesis of creation, and this was the belief held by the greatest philosophers in ancient times, such as Hermes Trismegistus, given the name Hanoch, and Pythagoras, Plato and others. Yet indeed in the case of Aristotle we have not found an interpretation of this sort.”*<sup>109</sup>

The Hermetic idea about the interconnectivity between the upper, spiritual world and the physical one is the key to understanding the way of thinking and conducting of the Renaissance scholars. The famous quotation can be read in the *Emerald Tablet*,<sup>110</sup> the thirteen sentences long ancient hermetic inscription written, allegedly, by Hermes Trismegistus himself, whose authorship is also assigned in the text itself. The meanings concealed in the *Emerald*

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>110</sup> “Quod est inferius, est sicut quod est superius, et quod est superius est sicut quod est inferius ad perpetranda miracula rei unius (...)”

[“(True it is, without falsehood, certain and most true.) That which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above, to accomplish the miracles of one thing.”]

This English translation of the *Emerald Table* is from a 12th century Latin translation of an Arabic version, trans. Robert Steele and Dorothea Waley Singer. Stanton J. Linden, *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28.

*Tablet* instruct an initiate to search for the ways through which they can change living beings and things in order to make them pure, perfect and restored to their ideal natures.<sup>111</sup>

### **1.3. Reinterpretation of Kabbalah - Christian Kabbalah**

The third important event that contributed to the specific intellectual development of the period was the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. This event resulted in the rise of great interest in the Kabbalah and the Hebrew language. Even though the most famous Kabbalistic works, the *Zohar* and the *Sefer Yetzirah*, were known in Italy among rabbis before the expulsion, the circulation of Kabbalistic writings in Venice and other parts of Italy became significant after it.<sup>112</sup> This interest brought about the great development of Christian Kabbalah, the founder of which was Pico della Mirandola. Pico moved to Florence in 1484 to study Plato and Plotinus close to Ficino.<sup>113</sup> However, he was a versatile scholar who aimed to incorporate into his philosophy different philosophies and theologies, and one of these was Kabbalah.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> “According to the Tabula Smaragdina man can realize the same radiating, life-creating warm light in himself and make it an art of his life. But he can also permeate things with it. This is the operation that was later called alchemy. Sometimes they call it gold making because gold is a metal analogous with the Sun, and when man permeates himself with light and warmth, he becomes Sun or Gold. According to alchemy beings and things can be changed or transformed. Especially since the way beings and things live on earth is neither natural nor perfect. But there is a procedure with which man can perfect himself and with the same procedure he can make things perfect, too. Alchemy is knowledge (knowing), which teaches that characters and elements can be changed.” Béla Hamvas, <http://www.tradicio.org/english/hamvastabulasmaraqdina.htm>.

<sup>112</sup> Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 33.

<sup>113</sup> Szönyi, “The Hermetic Revival in Italy,” 57.

<sup>114</sup> Pico got Kabbalistic manuscripts from his teacher Flavius Mithridates who most probably “encouraged Pico in the Christian interpretations of Cabala.” Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 20. Among other books, Mithridates provided Pico with the *Zohar*, Abulafia’s commentaries on Maimonides, Recanati’s interpretation of the Torah. Brian P. Copenhaver, *Renaissance Philosophy* (USA, Oxford University Press, 1992), 171. Flavius Mithridates was a scholar who greatly contributed to the rise of understanding of the Kabbalah among the 15th century Florentine Christian thinkers. He was a master of the Kabbalah and a translator of Kabbalistic books into Latin. Idel says that Mithridates also translated the *Aurea Dicta* (1485), a work that was attributed to Pythagoras, and other Pythagorean books, works of Abraham Abulafia and Menahem Recanati, and the Qur’an. Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 16-17.

Pico’s other teachers in Hebrew and Kabbalah were Rabbi Alemanno and Elijah del Medigo. Idel suggested that Pico and Alemanno met in 1486. Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 183, 185. See also: Szönyi, “The Hermetic Revival in Italy,” 47.

The Jewish theosophical tradition was reserved mostly for Jews during the Middle Ages. It was regarded by Jews to be sacrilegious to share the knowledge, which they perceived as sacred, with the gentiles. On the other hand, there was a certain degree of distrust of Christian scholars towards Jews. The Renaissance within its search for the roots and sources brought about deeper research of the Jewish tradition by gentile scholars.<sup>115</sup> The great power was seen in spoken words and written characters. Thorndike pointed out how these Renaissance scholars moved the boundaries in the understanding of the potential human powers to rule over their destinies and gain control over universal processes:

*“These men pushed the practice of allegorical interpretation of sacred writings, which had been in constant vogue among religious and theological writers from the days of the early Christian Fathers, to the extreme of discovering sublime secrets not only regarding every incident and object in Scripture as a parable, but by treating the text itself as cryptogram. Not only, like Isidore, did they see in every numerical measurement in the Bible mystic meaning, but in the very letters they doubted not there was hidden that knowledge by which one might gain control of all the processes of the universe; nay, penetrate through the ten sephiroth to the unspeakable and infinite source of all. For our visible universe is but the reflected image of an invisible, and each has subtle and practically unlimited power over the other. The key to that power is words.”<sup>116</sup>*

The non-Jewish scholars zealously looked for Jewish teachers to introduce them to and to elucidate the mysteries of the Rabbinical literature, for example, Jacob Loans and R. Obadiah Sforno were the teachers of Johannes Reuchlin,<sup>117</sup> and Elia Levita<sup>118</sup> was the teacher of Egidio of Viterbo. It became inevitable for the high positioned scholars of the time to receive education

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<sup>115</sup> Szönyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 96. The Popes Nicholas V and Sixtus IV had “significant collections of Hebrew manuscripts and encouraged translations from Hebrew to Latin.” Ibid., 97.

<sup>116</sup> Lynn Thorndike, *Place of Magic*, 20-21.

<sup>117</sup> Jacob Loans was a personal physician of Frederick III, and R. Obadiah Sforno was a writer of commentaries on Bible. Eric Zimmer, “Jewish and Christian Hebraist Collaboration in Sixteenth Century Germany,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series*, 71, no. 2 (1980): 70. Reuchlin started his studies in Hebrew, with his initial Jewish teacher Calman, in 1486. Charles Zika, “Reuchlin’s *De Verbo Mirifico* and the Magic Debate of the Late Fifteenth Century,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 39 (1976): 108.

<sup>118</sup> Elia Levita was a German Jew who spent most of his life in Italy. He was teaching at the University of Padua until 1509, and in 1512 he went to Rome, where he lived in the house of the Cardinal Egidio of Viterbo and taught him Hebrew. From 1529 to his death in 1549, Elia lived in Venice. King Francis I offered him the Hebrew chair at the Collège de France, but Levita declined it due to his old age. Frank Rosenthal, “The Study of the Hebrew Bible in Sixteenth-Century Italy,” *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol. 1 (1954): 85.

in Jewish tradition and the Hebrew language.<sup>119</sup> One of the prominent names was also Elia Menachem Chalfan, who in 1544 in Venice wrote his Rabbinical opinion on the question of whether the Hebrew language should be taught to gentiles or not.<sup>120</sup> Chalfan, Kaufmann reported, did allow the teaching of the language, but he

*“condemns the teaching of the oral tradition and its profound doctrines, and certainly of Theosophy. One of his observations casts a clear light on the deplorable conditions which had called forth the condemnation of Jews teaching Hebrew to Christians. He is of opinion that a strong reason for allowing faithful Jews to impart the elements of Hebrew to Christians lay in this, that the latter would in this way become acquainted with the honest, true, and unadulterated interpretation of the text of the holy writings, and not be constantly deceived by converts who made a business of their deceptions, and tried to make themselves agreeable to their clients by their partial disfigurements of the text.”<sup>121</sup>*

Yet, from Christian scholars' point of view the inclusion of Jewish tradition, into their syncretic philosophical and theological aims was more than understandable. Szönyi analyzed the motivations behind the rise of interest in Hebrew studies by Renaissance scholars and concluded that the following reasons were the leading agents: 1) the incorporation of the third sacred language in Christian tradition; 2) the idea of universal religion, a new syncretic combination of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism; and 3) certain similarities between Kabbalah and Hermeticism.<sup>122</sup>

Even though the Expulsion in 1492 brought to Italy many Spanish Jewish scholars and Kabbalists, the first Hebrew book was published before that time; by 1475, and by 1490s there were over a hundred printed titles.

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<sup>119</sup> David Kaufmann, “Elia Menachem Chalfan on Jews Teaching Hebrew to Non-Jews,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 9, no. 3. (1897): 500.

<sup>120</sup> Kaufmann, “Elia Menachem Chalfan,” 501. Kaufmann also pointed out that the same rabbi Elia Menachem Chalfan was the one who issued a Rabbinical opinion to Francesco Giorgi on the question of divorce of king Henry VIII.

<sup>121</sup> Kaufmann, “Elia Menachem Chalfan,” 502.

<sup>122</sup> Szönyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 97.

*“The information explosion led to the need of systematization, and it was during these generations that interest grew, and the need was seen to systematize the entire body of Jewish knowledge, including the Kabbalah.”*<sup>123</sup>

Moshe Idel investigated the question about the proliferation and translations of the *Zohar* in Italy in the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries. He had discovered that *Zohar* was accessible only partially in translation:

*“(...) in Italy not only were even Kabbalists unable to find large portions of the Zohar, but also they found it difficult to read, since the Aramaic dialect in which it was written was unknown to them. Even the translations into Hebrew failed to provide enough help, and the translated texts had to be explained in detail.”*<sup>124</sup>

This information should significantly influence our understanding of Camillo’s expressed sources. Camillo gives the impression that he read throughout the *Zohar*, while that is probably not the case.

Pico had already developed his syncretic Kabbalistic-Christian philosophy a few years before the expulsion, formulating his Kabbalist *Conclusions* by 1486, “when the persecutions of the Jews in Spain were mounting in intensity.”<sup>125</sup> Moshe Idel emphasized that for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries he could not find influences of Kabbalistic literature on Christianity in Italy, similar to those confirmed in the Catalan Kabbalah.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, different forms of Kabbalah came to Italy directly from Spanish and French centres and led to the popularity of comparison between Kabbalah and various philosophies in the fifteenth century Tuscany.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah* (San Francisco, CA/Newburyport, MA, Weiser Books, 1982), 171. On the beginnings of Kabbalah in Western Europe, see Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 27 et seq.

<sup>124</sup> Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 225.

<sup>125</sup> Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 18.

<sup>126</sup> Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 12, 13.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

It is worth mentioning, as well, that at the time of the expulsion an increased messianic and especially millenarian<sup>128</sup> expectations occurred in Jewish communities, which gave rise to calculations via astrology of the year, or the period when Messiah would come and save his people. Italy, after accepting around 9 000 Jewish exiles from Spain, became “the centre of messianic speculation and activity.”<sup>129</sup> The calculations were based on the old Kabbalistic methods of *gematria*, *notarikon*, and *themurah*,<sup>130</sup> a kind of numerological techniques where numerical values are applied to names, letters, words, and phrases according to defined codes to discover hidden meanings and to predict future events as written in the Scriptures, and to explain contemporary circumstances.<sup>131</sup> One of the most important and influential figures exiled from Spain, who wrote about the messianic expectations and dealt with the calculations of the end, was Abravanel.<sup>132</sup> Abravanel based his messianic ideas on his interpretations of the Bible and Talmud, historical events, and astrological calculations. His predictions of redemption were dated 1503-1531.<sup>133</sup> The astrological calculations were also strengthened in the philosophical frame by old Pythagoreanism that assigned qualities and meanings to numbers,

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<sup>128</sup> Stephen Sharot makes a clear distinction between Jewish millenarianism and messianism, saying that the millenarianism is based on a belief in a transformation of the world and redemption, which includes the “union of the terrestrial and the transcendental on this earth,” and often the messianic leader. Messianism, on the other hand, does not include the changes in nature, the end of the world or “innovations in creation”, but has the foundation in a belief that the messiah would come and “restore the kingdom of David, rebuild the temple, reinstate the ancient laws and sacrifices and gather the Jews from their dispersion.” However, there were Jewish thinkers merging the two expectations into one. Stephen Sharot, “Jewish Millenarianism: A Comparison of Medieval Communities,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 22, no. 3. (1980): 395.

<sup>129</sup> Sharot, “Jewish Millenarianism,” 398.

<sup>130</sup> Joseph Leon Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 16.

<sup>131</sup> Camillo’s involvement and interest in these methods is attested by himself and others. See in: Giulio Camillo, *Tutte L’opere* (Venice, 1566), 314-320; Wenneker, *An Examination*, 31-32; Tommaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale* (Venice, 1588), 257-258; Tommaso Garzoni, *Il teatro de’ vari, e diversi cervelli mondani* (Venice, 1585), 62v. Camillo himself, in the letter to Lucretia, called the method - SIRUF. See: Bolzoni, “Giulio Camillo’s Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah,” 24-25. This method “tzeruf” (letter permutation), according to Elke Morlok, “leads to intellection of the divine realm via language,” and encompasses Gematria, Notarikon and Temurah, named as an acronym GiNaT. Elke Morlok, “Visual and Acoustic Symbols in Gikatilla, Neoplatonic and Pythagorean Thought,” in *Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism*, ed. Peter. J. Forshaw (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016), 22, 29.

<sup>132</sup> Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 165.

<sup>133</sup> Sharot, “Jewish Millenarianism”, 398.

and which was rediscovered in the Hermetic studies of Pico, Reuchlin, and others. It is needless to say that a fundamental interpretative method of the Kabbalah is based on the numerical values of the Hebrew letters. Egidio de Viterbo, who dealt with numerical values of Hebrew letters and with the Pythagorean numbers,<sup>134</sup> deemed it to be of utmost necessity for Christians Kabbalists to learn

*“the various techniques of gematria and the various numerological alphabets used to decode the secrets breathed into scripture by the Spirit. They must also learn the mystical names of God and how those august names become ‘that most divine Name before ‘every knee must bend,’ as the Apostle witnesses,’ the name of Jesus that Christians cannot yet say because they are still ignorant of the sacred tongue.”*<sup>135</sup>

Kabbalah caused a shift in the interpretation of the Scriptures from allegorical to mystic, where mystic powers are contained in the letters and words.

*“Indeed, allegorical interpretation is liable to lead one into a belief that words, besides possessing a mystical significance with which the thought of their writer had endowed them, have in and of themselves great power. It borders upon the occult reveries of the Cabalists and upon that magic power of words which we have seen upheld by Roger Bacon, John Reuchlin and Henry Cornelius Agrippa.”*<sup>136</sup>

Not only was the secret knowledge hidden in the Hebrew letters, but in the concept of Sefirot as well. The Sefirot, which can be translated as counting or numeration, are the divine attributes, emanations, meanings and purposes, which are reinforced by, or contained in, their numerical values. The Sefirot, and the planetary deities, are seen as the measures of all the things.<sup>137</sup> These measures are used, for example, to measure time, to create a calendar, or to mark special days. Moreover, Sefirot were important in the Kabbalistic doctrine about the creation of the world. Later in the exposition of the Theatre, Camillo will state:

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<sup>134</sup> Brian Copenhaver and Daniel Stein Kokin, “Egidio Da Viterbo’s Book on Hebrew Letters: Christian Kabbalah in Papal Rome,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, 67, no. 1 (2014): 28.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>136</sup> Thorndike, *Place of Magic*, 73.

<sup>137</sup> Wenneker, *An Examination*, 12.



*“And all things which exist being either God or a thing created outside, and the stated numbers, weights, and measures not being created as the other numbered, weighed, and measured, it follows that they are God Himself.”<sup>138</sup>*

It seems that even among Kabbalistic circles, there was an unresolved question of whether the Sefirot are part of the creation or represent, possibly, God Himself.

Pico, according to Idel, was influenced by the writings of Menahem ben Benjamin Recanati (1223-1290),<sup>139</sup> a renowned Italian rabbi and Kabbalist. In Recanati’s understanding of the ten Sefirot, as a system of divine powers, Malkhut, the lowest Sefira, does not participate in the divine unity.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, for Recanati, human religious actions lead to ascension to God, and are like making God.<sup>141</sup> One who performs the commandments can “open the supernal source and cause the descent of influx upon the “commandment”, and a lower sefirah can ascend toward a higher sefirah.”<sup>142</sup> One of the crucial *topoi* for Recanati is elevation to God.<sup>143</sup> The key for elevation is hidden in the symbolic interpretations of the sacred texts. The elevation is a process of ascending back to the source. He emphasized the sympathetic relationship between the upper and this world. “All the supernal things are generating their paradigm here below.”<sup>144</sup> Abravanel also discussed the Sefirot. On the authority of Kabbalistic sages, he defined the Sefirot as

*“the divine figurations with which the world was created. Therefore they [the Kabbalistic sages] said that the sefirot are not created but are emanated, and that all of them united together in Him, blessed be His name, for they are the figurations of His loving-kindness and His willing what He created. In truth, Plato set down the knowledge of the separate general forms not as Aristotle understood them.”<sup>145</sup>*

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<sup>138</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 231.

<sup>139</sup> Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 137.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 106, 120.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 134-135.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 167.

The Kabbalistic Sefirot “are manifestations of the divine sphere and in the Renaissance were interpreted as equivalents of the Platonic Essences.”<sup>146</sup> There are a lot of similarities between the Platonic view on ideas and the Kabbalistic view of Sefirot, God’s emanations in the supercelestial world, which affect this world with their influxes, and correspondence of this world to the supercelestial one. However, there is one great difference: for Kabbalists, as Idel pointed out, “the upper world, namely the sefirot, requires human worship in order to function in a perfect way, a view that is foreign to Plato.”<sup>147</sup> The Renaissance syncretism of Christianity with the Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and Neoplatonism, gave rise to new ideas about the accessibility to God and the divine abilities, actions. and nature. This accessibility and the attempts to access were labelled magic, and the scholars promising it were called magicians.

*“The essence of Renaissance ‘Magia and Cabala’ was that it combined Hermetic processes and traditions with Cabala. The holy Hebrew magic both strengthened the weaker magic, and, still more important, made it safe, ensured that it was using angelic and not demonic powers.”<sup>148</sup>*

The first generation of Christian Kabbalists “have found keys to unlock the mysteries of sacred names.”<sup>149</sup> The most prominent advocate of the Italian Christian Kabbalistic

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<sup>146</sup> Radcliff-Umstead, “Giulio Camillo’s Emblems of Memory,” 50.

<sup>147</sup> Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 180.

<sup>148</sup> Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 80.

<sup>149</sup> Copenhaver, and Stein Kokin. “Egidio Da Viterbo’s Book on Hebrew Letters,” 2.

movement was Cardinal Egidio of Viterbo (1469? -1532).<sup>150</sup> He and scholars around him<sup>151</sup> were collecting and studying the great amount of Kabbalistic manuscripts that were circulating in Italy at the time. They were mainly interested in religious reform, which included the reform of language. The mystery of, or highly important relationship between religion and language was elaborated in Egidio's treatise, the *Book on Hebrew Letters* (*Libellus de litteris hebraicis*, written in 1517, but never published).<sup>152</sup> Egidio put forward the importance and power of letters, with the argument that the Creator used the letters when he wrote the Biblical sacred history, that contains the "enigmatic names of God".<sup>153</sup> The knowledge of Kabbalah, "an equally venerable Jewish tradition discovered for the Christian world by Giovanni Pico, Johann Reuchlin, and Paolo Ricci"<sup>154</sup>,<sup>155</sup> now deepens the understanding of the divine names that were already interpreted by ancient theologians and philosophers, such as Plato<sup>156</sup> and Dionysius the Areopagite. Egidio traced the roots of the sacred alphabet to the Chaldean script, from which both Egyptian and Hebrew "tongues" developed, and therefore both, Hebrew letters and the

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<sup>150</sup> Egidio, according to Copenhaver and Stein Kokin, most probably found a Jewish teacher in Pico's circle at Florence. Later, from 1517, Elia Levita stayed for a long time in the house of Egidio. The two were friends and certainly Elia was sharing with Egidio his knowledge in Kabbalah. However, some Jews were objecting to that due to the fact that Jews were forbidden to reveal the esoteric doctrines to gentiles. Elia justified himself saying that the prohibition stood only for the esoteric doctrines such as "the Creation, the Vision of Ezekiel and the Book Yetzirah"- which, conclude Copenhaver and Stein Kokin, means actually the Kabbalah. Even if Elia was not teaching Egidio the secret tradition, there were other Jews who would. Some of these were the converts from Judaism to Christianity, like Flavius Mithridates and Paolo Ricci, who were revealing the secrets of Jewish esoteric doctrines to gentiles. Similarly, Yohann Alemanno was teaching Pico della Mirandola. Copenhaver and Stein Kokin. "Egidio Da Viterbo's Book on Hebrew Letters," 9.

Egidio had a copy of Zohar, and a partial Latin translation of it. Also, he admired Origen, and sides with Jerome's Biblical interpretations. Copenhaver and Stein Kokin. "Egidio Da Viterbo's Book on Hebrew Letters," 25.

<sup>151</sup> "Thus, Camillo re-elaborates for his own purposes a scholarly tradition that sought to reconcile the Kabbalah with Christianity and the principal exponents were Egidio da Viterbo, Annio da Viterbo, Francesco Zorzi" and Pico della Mirandola. Bolzoni, "Giulio Camillo's Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah," 19.

<sup>152</sup> Copenhaver and Stein Kokin. "Egidio Da Viterbo's Book on Hebrew Letters," 36.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>154</sup> Paolo Ricci (?-1541) wrote the *Isagoge in eruditionem Cabbalistarum* (Pavia, 1510), in 1516 translated the *Gates of Light* written by Joseph Gikatilla. Ibid., 8.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>156</sup> Egidio met Ficino few years before Ficino died (1499), and Copenhaver and Stein Kokin state that "the last phase of Ficino's revival of Platonism lies behind Egidio's desire for a reform of language." Ibid., 26.

Egyptian hieroglyphs, “capture the divine unity”. God himself has hidden the theological mysteries into the sacred Hebrew letters, in their shapes and their sounds. Latin and Greek languages were not sufficient for these holy matters, since in the translations “the alphabet lost some of its original capabilities, of which only traces remain in the scripts now used by Christians.”<sup>157</sup> Egidio encouraged Pope Leo X to “restore the integrity of the holy tongue”.<sup>158</sup> Once Christian Kabbalists started to read the Holy Script by using the sacred numerology hidden in the Hebrew letters, they were able to read it accurately and deeply. Nothing is accidental in the Holy Script, “every feature of the script itself – including the shapes of the letters and their parts – is a hermeneutic clue, which is why nothing may be altered when the text is copied.”<sup>159</sup> Egidio, therefore, encouraged the Pope to introduce at least few of the Hebrew letters into the Latin alphabet, so that Christians can also “write, read and understand what is divine: ה ה ו he, heth, ain.”<sup>160</sup> Copenhaver and Stein Kokin pointed out that the guide for Egidio's understanding of the alphabet was the *Book of the Figure* (*Sefer ha-Temunah*). “The book is transformative”, say the authors, “the reader wheels through its letters to experience birth, death, and rebirth.”<sup>161</sup>

A member of Egidio's circle, important for the current research, was a Franciscan friar, Francesco Giorgi (Zorzi) of Venice. Giorgi wrote the *De harmonia mundi totius*, published in 1525. He was influenced by Florentine Neoplatonism, being a student of Pico, and Johannes

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>161</sup> The *Sefer ha-Temunah* deals with the “millenarian doctrine of cosmic cycles” written by a Byzantine Jew, and circulated in Italy from the late fifteenth century. Ibid., 12.

Reuchlin<sup>162</sup>.<sup>163</sup> Giorgi's Kabbalistic thought was inspired by Pico, and "enriched by the new waves of Hebrew studies of which Venice, with its renowned Jewish community, was an important centre."<sup>164</sup> Giorgi's thought included the Pythagoro-Platonic numerological tradition, probably following his teacher Reuchlin. Reuchlin, in his *De arte cabalistica* (1517<sup>165</sup>), aimed to connect thoughts of Pythagoras and Pythagorean doctrine of numbers with Kabbalist numerology.<sup>166</sup> Giorgi, according to Yates, made correlations between Sefirot and Christian, Pseudo-Dionysius', angelic system. He, like Agrippa, makes correlations between angelic hierarchies, Sefirot, and planetary spheres.<sup>167</sup> Christian Kabbalists, in their syncretic attempts, aimed to explain and understand the creation and the nature of the world by incorporating the Kabbalistic concept of Sefirot.

Through the Kabbalistic methods for deciphering hidden meanings in the Scriptures, Christian Kabbalists interpreted that the world was divided into three parts. Pico described the three worlds with the following words:

*"Here there is an alternation of life and death; there, eternal life and unchanging activity; in the heavens, stability of life but change of activity and position. This world is composed of the corruptible substance of bodies; that one of the divine nature of the mind; the heavens of body, but incorruptible, and of mind, but enslaved to body. The third is moved by the second; the second is governed by the first; (...)."*<sup>168</sup>

In addition to the tripartite division of the world, important was, also, the Kabbalistic teaching about the threefold creation of the human soul. The Kabbalistic tripartite theory of the soul strengthened the ideas about the deification of human beings.

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<sup>162</sup> "It may be said, too, that from Reuchlin's time no writer who touched on cabalism with any thoroughness did so without using him as a source." Blau, *The Christian Interpretation*, 60.

<sup>163</sup> Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science, The Sixteenth Century*, Vol. 6, part 2. (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1941), 450.

<sup>164</sup> Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 33.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>166</sup> Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 224.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 39

<sup>168</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 75-76.

## CHAPTER 2: THE THOUGHT OF GIULIO CAMILLO

This chapter outlines three layers of Camillo's Theatre: encyclopedic, rhetoric, and esoteric. I shall focus on the third layer, which is, to my understanding, the main purpose of the Theatre, and it is about the transmutation of the soul, or deification. Camillo, according to Bolzoni, revealed his "secret objective" in his treatise entitled *De transmutatione*, and she says that the Theatre was supposed to

*"teach the three arts of metamorphosis: alchemy, which acts on things; eloquence, which acts on words; and deification, which acts on the soul. At its most secret level, the theatre could operate in such a way as to allow the human mind to recover its universal dimension and the connection with its divine component."*<sup>169</sup>

Camillo, to develop his idea about the transmutation of the soul, incorporated the Hermetic concept of deification, the Neoplatonic concepts of microcosmic and macrocosmic correspondences, and the Chain of Being, and the Platonic-Kabbalistic concept of the three worlds and the tripartite soul. Camillo used his knowledge in rhetoric and classical literature, rendering the classical mnemonic discipline, the art of memory, into the art of recalling. The metaphysical dimension in the Theatre, meaning the transformation of the art of memory into the art of recalling, is given with the soul's journey through the celestial spheres.

### 2.1. Transcelestial Ascension and Descension

Probably the most famous passage about the microcosmic and macrocosmic correspondences can be found in Macrobius' Commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*:

*"Accordingly, since Mind emanates from the Supreme God and Soul from Mind, and Mind, indeed, forms and suffuses all below with life, and since this is the one splendor lighting up everything visible in all, like a countenance reflected in many mirrors arranged in a row, and since all follow on in continuous succession, degenerating step by step in their downward course, the close observer will find that from the Supreme God even to the bottommost dregs of the*

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<sup>169</sup> Bolzoni, "The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo: Alchemy, Rhetoric and Deification in the Renaissance" 71.

*universe there is one tie, binding at every link and never broken. This is the golden chain of Homer which, he tells us, God ordered to hang down from the sky to the earth.*"<sup>170</sup>

Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, according to Macrobius' Commentary, "embraces the entire body of philosophy" and "there is nothing more complete than this work."<sup>171</sup> As professor Szőnyi pointed out, the logic of correspondences is based on an understanding of the world as hierarchically organized, in which there are "the organic, or even occult, mystical correspondences between the elements".<sup>172</sup> All these elements are, thus, connected through the Chain of Being in a hierarchical order. The microcosmic correspondences with the macrocosm are what make possible the constant flow of the celestial influences, the ascension to the divine realms, and the descension to the inferior world. The world as organically organized is visible in Ramon Lull's works as well. Lull's concept of ascension would make available the universal knowledge, the *pansophia*, which was one of the aims of the sixteenth-century thinkers.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, Lull maintained the organic quality when dealing with the "structure of the world," combining logic and metaphysics in a sense that it regards both, the principles outside and inside the soul. This would enable a diligent student to "discover a 'true law' (*vera lex*)".<sup>174</sup> The structure of the world for Lull has the unbreakable connection between the soul and the objective reality. In Lull's *De ascensu et descensu intellectus*, according to Joseph Victor, it is written that we are given the opportunity to discover the profound universal knowledge through symbols:

*"The entire universe is ordered in such a way as to be a giant collection of symbols that lead to the divine. This complicated ladder of beings (stones, plants, animals, man, angels, God) corresponded to the various cognitive faculties of the mind. Together subject and object form a complete system of knowledge that leads man inevitably to God. Cusanus adopted this schema,*

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<sup>170</sup> Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius, Marcus Tullius Cicero, trans. William Harris Stahl, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1990) I, XIV.15, 145. See also Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 25.

<sup>171</sup> Macrobius and Cicero, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, II, XVII.15, 246.

<sup>172</sup> Szőnyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 24.

<sup>173</sup> Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, 61.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

*adding only that these qualities must be 'quasi-divine' since they mirror God's perfection. All are contained in man, who now becomes a microcosm, a little world capable of scrutinizing the macrocosm, assimilating it, and thereby rising to the knowledge of God.*"<sup>175</sup>

Pico, according to Yates, divided Kabbalah into two groups. The first group was the *ars combinandi*, where he placed Ramon Lull, while the other one was "a way of capturing the powers of superior things," or the powers of spirits and angels."<sup>176</sup> The operations applied for practicing the second type of Kabbalah were "done in the intellectual part of the soul and can be so intense as to result in the death of the body ("this kiss of death")."<sup>177</sup> Pico's practical Christian Kabbalah can be understood as "a mystical ascent through the spheres of the universe to a mystical Nothing beyond them."<sup>178</sup>

The harmonic logic used to construct the universe was emphasized by Ficino. This harmony provided human beings with ways and clues for reaching and grasping the everlasting truths of the upper world:

*"Since the heavens have been constructed according to a harmonic plan and move harmonically and bring everything about by harmonic sounds and motions, it is logical that through harmony alone not only human beings but all things below are prepared to receive, according to their abilities, celestial things."*<sup>179</sup>

Ficino, according to Allen, elaborated the concept of the "six link golden chain", which stretches from heaven to earth.<sup>180</sup> These six levels are showing the ways in which the divine light pours down to the inferior world: God – angels – soul – soul's *idolum* (image, form) –

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<sup>175</sup> Joseph Victor, "The Revival of Lullism at Paris, 1499-1516," *Renaissance Quarterly* Vol. 28, no. 4 (1975): 518-519.

<sup>176</sup> Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 23.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 3. XXII, 363.

<sup>180</sup> Michael J. B. Allen, "Transfiguration and the Fire within: Marsilio Ficino on the Metaphysics and Psychology of Light," in *Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism*, ed. Peter. J. Forshaw (Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 2016), 53.



*idolum*'s aethereal vehicle – elemental body.<sup>181</sup> Thus, it seems that Ficino saw the Chain of Being in terms of the creation of the soul.

An important innovation in the Florentine Neoplatonism, as pointed out by Szönyi, was a shift of human position in the Chain of Being – “from fixed to movable. As a result, the Neoplatonists thought, man could climb up the Chain, even up to God.”<sup>182</sup> The “golden chain”,<sup>183</sup> the same one as explained by Macrobius, in the Theatre is placed under the Sun on the sixth level, the Winged Sandals of Mercury: “The golden chain shall indicate going to the sun, taking the sun, to stretch out to the sun.”<sup>184</sup> This image does not repeat on other levels, nor Camillo elaborates his choice further. Bolzoni found the account of the golden chain (*la catena d'oro*) in Camillo's *Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio*, as an image of free will, or a will to consent to the divine action “*del libero consenso all'azione divina*”.<sup>185</sup> The concept of free will is one of the important *topoi* in the discussion about human abilities and options regarding their divine ascent. Pico discussed it in *On the Dignity of Man* by saying that the choice of what humans are nurturing in themselves is what makes their transformations possible:

*“At man's birth the Father placed in him every sort of seed and sprouts of every kind of life. The seeds that each man cultivates will grow and bear their fruit in him. If he cultivates vegetable seeds, he will become a plant. If the seeds of sensation, he will grow into brute. If rational, he will come out a heavenly animal. If intellectual, he will be an angel, and a son of God. And if he is not contented with the lot of any creature but takes himself up into the center of his own unity, then, made one spirit with God and settled in the solitary darkness of the Father, who is above all things, he will stand ahead of all things. Who does not wonder at this chameleon which we are?”*<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>182</sup> Szönyi, *John Dee's Occultism*, 87.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. In the *Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio*, Camillo explained that the *catena aurea* to which he referred was the one from Homer, “gentilmente interpretata da Dionisio Ariopagita.” Giulio Camillo Delminio, *Tutte le Opere, cioè Discorso in materia del suo Theatro. Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio. La Idea. Due Trattati: l'uno delle materia, l'altro della imitatione. Due orationi. Rime del detto* (Venice, 1554), 54. Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idea del Theatro*, fn.1, 230. *Iliad*, VIII.19 σεῖρήν χρυσεῖην.

<sup>184</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 337.

<sup>185</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'idea del Theatro*, 230, fn. 1.

<sup>186</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 5.

Giorgi, on the other hand, defined the “golden chain” as charity and love with which Jesus Christ (the Supreme Priest) came to bind us, stretching to this with his every word and act. Thus, continues Giorgi, He bound both, ancient and modern family; heavenly with earthly things; He bound creature with God, just as in Himself there were bound two natures, and from the two natures one was made. Finally, He bound all the parts of the body, Himself being the head and the connection of the nerves.<sup>187</sup>

In Giorgi’s system, the influxes from the highest points come down through the seven planets, and the twelve signs of the zodiac. For Giorgi, and I would add for Camillo as well, the planets do not emanate bad influences, but rather “all the celestial influences are good, and it is only a bad reception of them which can make them bad or unfortunate. There is, thus, free-will in the system, free-will to make a good, not a bad, use of the stars.”<sup>188</sup> That means that one has the responsibility of how they use the influences of the planets. If a person uses the influences in a good way, they will develop virtues, if the influences are used in a bad way, a person will develop vices. The connection of planets with angels and Sefirot, Yates pointed out, makes the influences of the planets purified.<sup>189</sup> For example, Saturn, which is usually seen as governing unfortunate characters, in Giorgi’s thought becomes the greatest inspiration for contemplation and study of the highest truths. Also, Mars, which in the traditional astrology causes bad and angry characters, in Giorgi’s system provides a character with force and strength and it is connected with the angelic hierarchy of the Virtues.<sup>190</sup> Giorgi’s planetary influences can be put into correlation with Camillo’s distribution of virtues and vices in the Theatre. One out of many

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<sup>187</sup> “Et quae est cathena haec aurea, nisi charitas et amor, quo ligare nos venit noster Pontifex Maximus, ad hoc tendens omni verbo et opere suo? Ligavit itaque utramque familiam, antiquam et novam: ligavit coelestia et terrestria: ligavit creaturam cum Deo, sicut in ipso erant ligatae duae naturae, et factum est ex utraque unum. Ligavit tandem omnia membra ipse caput existens, et nervorum compactio.” Francesco Giorgi, *De harmonia mundus totius*, II.3.7, 231r. Translated and paraphrased by J. Uremovic.

<sup>188</sup> Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 39.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

correlative examples can be found beneath the Cave of Mars in the Theatre, where Camillo put four images: “Vulcan”, “a Young Girl whose hair is raised toward the Heavens”, “Two Snakes who are fighting”, and “Mars on a Dragon”. The image of Vulcan symbolizes fire, and “this image with its contents cannot be appropriate to another planet, only to Mars, because Mars alone is hot and dry, as is fire, whereas the sun is hot and damp.”<sup>191</sup> The image of Young Girl with her hair raised toward the Heavens symbolizes strength, as the hair “of our interior man should draw dew, that is, the living moisture from the influxes of the supercelestial channels, from whence comes all its strength.”<sup>192</sup> The same image on other levels stands for “vigorous, strong and true nature”, “to give vigour or strength, or to work around the truth”.<sup>193</sup> On the other hand, the image of Mars on the Dragon stands for “things naturally noxious and poisonous”, and the image of two snakes fighting stands for “discord, dissension and the difference of things”.<sup>194</sup> Thus, we can see how Camillo put under Mars positive and negative effects applicable to the nature of Mars. The same method he applies to other planets and levels. That the planets are not fortunate or unfortunate by themselves is an important difference compared to traditional astrology.

The Theatre was supposed to enable one to find causes of things, which abide in the supercelestial reality, and not only mere effects. Reaching the source of things would make possible the conservation of all the knowledge in the drawers:

*“This great and incomparable arrangement not only performs the service of conserving for us the things, words and art entrusted to it, which are with impunity, shaped to our every need before we can find them, but gives us also true wisdom in whose sources comes to us knowledge of things from their causes and not from their effects.”*<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 265.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 205.

Camillo's construction claimed the possibility for a spectator to see, to grasp the universal knowledge. If one were able to look at the whole universe from above, they would understand the universal realities and, through the deduction, the particularities as well. He uses the metaphor of how a person is not able to see the whole woods if they are standing in the middle of the trees, but if there would be a hill to which they can ascend, then they would be able to see the whole.

*"If we were in a great wood and wished to see the whole of it well, staying in it, we would be unable to satisfy our wish, since we would be able to see only a small part of the view about us, the tree around blocking for us the view of things far off. But, if near to that wood there was an incline, which led around to the top of a high hill, ascending from the wood by the incline, we would begin to see the shape of much of it; then having risen to the top of the hill, we would be able to recognize the whole. The wood is our Inferior world, the incline is the Heavens, and the hill, the Supercelestial world. And in order to understand these things of the inferior world, it is necessary to climb to the superior; and looking down from on high, we shall be able to have a surer knowledge of these things."*<sup>196</sup>

Camillo explicitly referred to Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, with a purpose to enforce the idea of deduction, by which particulars in the inferior world can be fully understood only when looked upon from the universals, the "Superior" areas.<sup>197</sup> "It appears that the pagan writers of old did not totally lack this method of understanding", Camillo says. The difference he sees between these ancients and himself is that they "stopped in the Heavens", while Camillo assures the reader that he goes beyond, "to that height, from whence our souls are descended and where they have to return; since this is the true way of knowing and understanding."<sup>198</sup> However, this level of understanding humans cannot grasp by their own "strength", but they need to "pray to His Divine Majesty that he makes us worthy of that grace, which when then it pleased Him, He gave to the same Moses, showing him His many marvels (...)".<sup>199</sup> We find Pico, reaching the

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 205-207.

<sup>197</sup> "And Cicero, in the *Somnium Scipionis*, has Scipio's grandfather show him earthly matters from Heaven." Ibid., 207.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 207-209.

exposition of the supercelestial level, praying to the “ultramundane spirits” to unveil his eyes in his contemplative journey “above the heavenly region to that of true repose, peace, and tranquillity, especially that peace which this visible and corporeal world cannot give.”<sup>200</sup> Thus, we can see the need for the willingness of the divinity to help them climb to the highest levels of understanding. One who wishes to ascend to the supreme universal understanding should follow the path of analogies. The correspondences between the things above and the things below set the basic law of analogical logic.

*“Notwithstanding, in place of those, we shall take the seven planets, whose natures are already familiar to the ordinary man, but we shall use them in such a way, that we do not propose them as ends, beyond which we cannot pass, but as those symbols, which to the minds of wise men still represent the seven Supercelestial measures. And it is quite rightly that when speaking of inferior matters, their nature symbolizes to us the seven planets, just as this is subordinate to that and that to that other, so that still speaking of planets, they might bring to mind those sources from whence they have their strength.”*<sup>201</sup>

Thus, it may be concluded that attaining universal knowledge through the elevation and ascension was one of the main elements in, and at the same time a result of, the process of deification. In this sense, universal knowledge necessarily included the capacity and the experiences of the soul. The interconnection of the subjective and objective realities inspired, it seems, Camillo to develop the idea that the soul can attain universal knowledge by ascending if at the same time the soul can recall its descending.

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<sup>200</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 106.

<sup>201</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 205-207.

## 2.2. Transmutation

Another part of the process of deification included the cleaning of the soul. Pico saw the way of ascension in the cleaning of the soul and putting it on the right tracks by means of moral science and dialectic, where the soul shall be perfected “with the knowledge of divine things” by the “light of natural philosophy.”<sup>202</sup> In Pico’s system, the human soul is created from the same nature as the heavenly soul. Therefore, humans are put equal with the heavenly creation and possess the same, or similar powers:

*“We shall honor and exalt this noble creation [the heavenly soul]. If, however, we have not forgotten the Platonic notion we mentioned- not to speak of the theologians – that the Divine Artificer compounded our souls in the same mixing bowl and of the same elements as the celestial souls, (...). As it is written in the Alcibiades, man is not this weak and earthbound thing we see, but a soul, an intelligence, which transcends all the boundaries of heaven and all the passage of time.”*<sup>203</sup>

Yet, the concept of deification, as explained by Reuchlin in the *De arte cabalistica* (1517), might give us a better understanding of what this concept means and includes. Reuchlin began with the notion of how God composed a human being of the mud of earth (*limo terrae*) and breath of life (*spiraculo vitae*). God made a human being from mud so that they would prudently take care of physical things, and he gave them the breath of life so that they would wisely love divine things, and bring out from the earth the living soul (*animam viventem*) according to their own proper image (*speciem suam atque propriam*), meaning the exquisite Idea (*peculiarem Ideam*), born not from animals, nor plants, nor stones, nor trees, but from the mouth of God and breathed into<sup>204</sup> by the divine spirit before the face of God the mere enlightening of their mind. And this is the deification, Reuchlin affirms, when from the present object through its medium the exterior sense passes over to the interior sense, and that to the

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<sup>202</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 9.

<sup>203</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 104.

<sup>204</sup> Afflatus equals inspiratus in Reuchlin *Vocabularius Breviloquus* (Basel, 1486).

imagination, and the imagination to thought, and the thought to reason, and the reason<sup>205</sup> to the intellect, and the intellect<sup>206</sup> to mind, and the mind<sup>207</sup> to the light, which illuminates a human being, and he grasps into himself the illumination. Hence, certainly, concludes Reuchlin, it was correctly accepted what Kabbalists thought that, in the tree of the ten numerations, Tiferet, the microcosm, should be placed in the middle of the Sefirot, that great Adam as the tree of life should be placed in the middle of the Ideal paradise, or like a straight middle line.<sup>208</sup> Reuchlin's definition of deification is, thus, an inner process of complete and illuminated knowledge of the objective and the subjective reality, and the actualization of the God-given power for creation. In Agrippa's system humans can have "the power over nature, and the intimate communion with nature, which Adam possessed before the Fall but which was lost through sin."<sup>209</sup> Camillo, attested by Bolzoni as well, expressed the same implications, namely that humankind has the possibility to actualize the prelapsarian perfect state.<sup>210</sup> Camillo searched for, and, presumably, believed that he had found, the key to returning into this prelapsarian powerful state of being.

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<sup>205</sup> *Ratio* equals a thing firm, a movement of "mentis" which enables it to discern and connect things. It is also a movement which can distinguish true from false. Johannes Reuchlin, *Vocabularius breviloquus* (Basel, 1486).

<sup>206</sup> *Intellectus* is a power of soul to comprehend the incorporeal substances whose forms are removed, or the forms around these substances. Reuchlin, *Vocabularius Breviloquus*.

<sup>207</sup> *Mens* is a part of soul through which the whole reason and intelligence are understood (*percipitur*). *Mens* is what stands out in the soul. Or it is the soul itself while it remembers and perceptible things reduces to memory. Reuchlin, *Vocabularius Breviloquus*.

<sup>208</sup> "Hominem enim melior natura deus ut extat sacratissima historia ex duobus composuit limo terrae et spiraculo vitae, ut limo indutus corporea prudenter curet et spiraculo vitae praeditus, sapienter amet divina, producatque terra animam viventem ad speciem suam atque propriam, videlicet illam peculiarem Ideam, non brutorum, non plantarum, non lapidum aut lignorum, sed ab ore dei natam, et in faciem eius divino spiritu afflatam mentis suae ipsam illuminationem. Haec illa est quae paulo ante a nobis vocabatur deificatio, cum ab obiecto praesente per medium suum exterior sensus transit in sensionem interiorem, et illa in imaginationem, et imaginatio in existimationem, et existimatio in rationem, et ratio in intellectum, et intellectus in mentem, et mens in lucem, quae illuminat hominem, et illuminatum in se corripit. Hinc recte acceptum esse apparet quod Cabalistae in arbore decem numerationum Tiphereth μικρόκοσμον in medio Sephiroth ponendum censuerunt, mangum illum Adam quasi lignum vitae in medio Idealis paradisi, ut quasi lineam rectam, ut aiunt, mediam." Johannes Reuchlin, *De arte Cabalistica libri tres* (Hagenau, 1517), ii G,H,I. Translated and paraphrased by J. Uremovic.

<sup>209</sup> Yates, *Collected Essays*, 266.

<sup>210</sup> Bolzoni, "Giulio Camillo's Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah," 23.

The prelapsarian state means the direct flow of the supercelestial divine influxes into a human being who has pure *spiraculo vitae*.

To reach the prelapsarian state, Camillo developed a rather original concept, which relies on the threefold creation of the world and the parallelism with the tripartite creation of the soul. The transmutation, according to Camillo, is the process of removing all the impure particles from a substance. And not only removing the unclean particles but also created parts, so that the only thing left would be the “product”. Once unclean and created things are removed, one can reach or become the infinite and eternal product. The difference between the produced and created things, or a product and a creation, concludes Camillo, is that the produced things are covered by the created, and full of impurity due to Adam’s sin.<sup>211</sup>

To understand what should be cleaned in the process of deification, let us inspect Camillo’s idea of the creation of the world. God drew out the manifested world from the *prima materia*. The *prima materia* was the first thing that God produced and not created. Camillo also explains the difference between the two. The things produced are eternal and they remain always, while created things are subjected to generation and corruption.<sup>212</sup> Regarding the production of the primary matter and forming out of it the three worlds and all they encompass, including the soul, Camillo uses the reference to, as he says, Lull’s *Testament*:

“Ramon Lull bore witness in the book which he called his Testament, written while he was detained in England, that God created a primary matter, then He divided it into three parts. Of the choicest part of the most excellent, He made the angels and our souls, of the next, the Heavens, and of the third, this inferior world. Now this primary matter pertaining both to the celestial mass and to the inferior world, is continually under the wheel, I do not mean of ‘generation’ and ‘corruption’ as Aristotle was in the habit of writing, since these terms displease Mercury Trismegistus, but according to his judgment, of ‘manifestation’ and ‘concealment’.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Camillo, *De Transmutatione*, in: Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’Idea del Theatro.*, 281-282.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 287, 288.

<sup>213</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 219.



The heavens were created for the exact purpose to filter the influxes from the supercelestial sphere to the inferior world:

*“Because the influx of the supercelestial streams did not suit the primary matter, the second day he (‘elôhiym) formed the Rachia, that is, the mass of the heavens and not the firmament (...). Because it is only the eighth sphere and he put the aforesaid spacious mass between the supercelestial world and the inferior, to the end that it might divide the waters of the supercelestial streams which do not wet, from the waters of this world, which do wet, (...). Therefore, the said heavenly mass was interposed and spread out, so that the influx of the higher waters did not rain more than might be suitable to the capacity of matter.”*<sup>214</sup>

Camillo emphasized the necessity of the individual beings to go backward, meaning from the particular to the universal. Nature starts from the general, says Camillo in the *De Transmutatione*, where the essences, natures, and substances of the things, are preserved. Nevertheless, God’s man, rhetor, and alchemist of nature, all must start from individual and retrograde to general, after removing all the unclean particles. That what is small for human beings, is big to nature (the virtue of seed; *la virtu seminaria*), and what is big to human beings, it is small to nature (manifested “remains” and accidents; *la dimonstracion delle spoglie et delli accidenti*).<sup>215</sup>

Images on Camillo’s fourth level, the Gorgons, provided with the impressions of the soul and its ascension and descension. I will, in my further elaboration, touch upon Camillo’s representation of how the soul descends on the level of Gorgons, from the first doors of the Moon and ascends at the last doors of Saturn. For the time being, I will describe one of the images denoting the spiritual transformation, namely the image of the Hercules who lifts Antaeus, placed under the Gorgons of Saturn. Hercules stands for the human spirit, with the chest as the “seat of wisdom and prudence”,<sup>216</sup> and Antaeus for the body. Body and the Spirit are in constant fight, so the spirit needs to raise the body from the ground in order to win. The

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 241-243.

<sup>215</sup> Camillo, *De transmutatione*, in: Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’Idea del Theatro*, 285.

<sup>216</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 313.

feet of Antaeus symbolize emotions, and these need to be detached from the ground, where the strength for the body comes from, until it kills it. Camillo explained his logic: “Here we have two things principally to consider: the one is the death of the body, the other is almost the transformation of it into the spirit. And truly, if our body does not die from the death of the emotions, it cannot become spiritual, nor make itself one in Christ.”<sup>217</sup> The further explanation involves a Biblical fable of a grain that needs to die first to bring forth fruits.<sup>218</sup> “And”, Camillo continued, “if our interpretation is considered well, one will find that we have again shown the transformation, which is one of the two things proposed.”<sup>219</sup>

It seems that Camillo saw the process of cleaning and the purification of the soul as the method for reaching the prelapsarian state, which would be the immortal state as well. The immortality of the soul was one of the highly debated subjects of the time period,<sup>220</sup> with the great exponent in the discussion being Pietro Pomponazzi, publishing the *De immortalitate* in Bologna in 1516. “The beginning of Pomponazzi’s opusculum is remarkable. It is almost the synopsis of the motive of the human global mediation that was characteristic of both the Platonists and the Aristotelians of the fifteenth century.”<sup>221</sup> Pomponazzi’s argument will end

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. “If perhaps you do not know, we begin to die when we first begin to live, and death extends as long as life, and we first cease to die when we shall be separated from the body of this death through the death of the body.” Pico della Mirandola, *On Being and the One*, 47.

<sup>219</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 315.

<sup>220</sup> Egidio of Viterbo, at the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) defended the Neoplatonistic and Lullistic claims that the immortality of soul can be argued by reason. Victor, “The Revival of Lullism at Paris,” 527.

<sup>221</sup> Garin, *History of Italian Philosophy*, 342. The referred opening of the *De immortalitate* can be found on the same page. It says that the ancient perspective that humans are between “eternal and temporal things” and therefore, “partakes in the nature of both,” and they can choose to which they incline. As a consequence, there can be three kinds of human beings: Gods- fully rational; beasts- who abandoned the intellect and succumbed to senses.; “true and proper humans, who live tolerably according to moral virtues, without totally embracing the intellect or abandoning themselves to the body.” Camillo wrote, in regard to the “active intellect”, a thought looking very much as a response to Pomponazzi’s passage: “Which intellect the philosophers, ignorant of God, called reason, by which they say man separates himself from beasts. But in truth, man is called “rational” not to say it better, “intellectual”, because he alone among animals is capable of this “active intellect”.” Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 303.

with the rejection of the immortality of the soul, leaving certain space to the faith for claiming it. "(...) Nothing remains on the philosophical level for the proof of immortality; "no natural reasons can be brought up capable of convincing that the soul is immortal" (...). Faith is the only one affirming it, and "those who walk through the ways of the faithful would remain solid and secure."<sup>222</sup>

Camillo's view on the immortality of the soul is based on the tripartite theory of the soul. In this way, the soul has the opportunity to become immortal through the concept of free will. The tripartite nature of the soul and its immortality will be discussed in the Third Chapter of the current thesis. Moreover, the Theatre promised a method of restoration of true nature of things, a reintegration to a true self, both immortal in that sense:

*"They are, therefore, the Ideas, forms and exemplars of essential things in the eternal mind existing in that also before things were made, whence all things created drew their being and they bear, as from seals, a particular impression. And so always in their being do they persevere with God. Their eternity makes all species remain eternal, while the individuals are transitory and mortal. Therefore, although the individuals transform themselves and deteriorate or conceal themselves, nevertheless, the species and the eternal Ideas live on in the living God."*<sup>223</sup>

Camillo, in his treatise *De Transmutatione*, defined three types of transmutation: "divine transmutation, the transmutation of speech and that which pertains to metals. And there is a marvellous correspondence between all three."<sup>224</sup> The second type of transmutation was the transmutation of rhetoric. One who "mastered this art of rhetoric would be capable of manipulating words and rhetorical artifices at will and subjecting them to an infinitive variety of transformations."<sup>225</sup> Camillo belonged to a group of scholars believing that rhetoric was given to humankind directly from God. For Camillo, to my understanding, words are magical

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<sup>222</sup> Garin, *History of Italian Philosophy*, 347.

<sup>223</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 231-233.

<sup>224</sup> Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, Appendix VII, 229.; Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idea del Theatro*, 281.

<sup>225</sup> Bolzoni, "The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo: Alchemy, Rhetoric, and Deification in the Renaissance", 67.

and have creative and re-creative force, the rhetorical figures are designed in the supercelestial realms and are also analogies of God's and angelic languages. The rhetorical figures are the gifts by which humans can overcome the limits of human languages. The purpose of rhetorical devices, as we can see even in some of the names for the figures of speech, is to find a way around the mere words for expressing imaginative and complex thoughts. For example, the figures formed with -bole or phor(e): hyperbole (to throw above), metaphor (to carry over), antimetabole (opposite change over), etc. The rhetorical figures are the instruments by which humans can grasp the concepts and meanings beyond the ordinary language capability. The rhetorical figures themselves are "images", as the name says "figures". They make possible the expression of more than plain information. They have certain volume that allows thoughts to be expressed in more than mono-dimensional ways. An initiate in the Theatre would be able, if not to create the world, then at least to re-create it.

It might be useful to, at this point, mention Elke Morlok's fantastic summary of prelapsarian language by which Adam had the power to give names to things around him. Adam had this power, according to Morlok, due to his understanding of the true natures of things and "the secret orders of the universe."<sup>226</sup> This prelapsarian linguistic power was understood as proof of the direct flow of the supercelestial influxes to Adam and reaching that prelapsarian clean state of being had been one of the objectives of scholars such as Camillo.

The transmutation of rhetoric, in that sense, would be the restoration of the universal language before the Fall. Camillo attempted, it seems, to regain the *clavis universalis* through the employment of the images in the Theatre. Therefore, Camillo must have applied the whole range of rhetorical skills to the invention, composition, and disposition of the images in the Theatre. Among the rhetorical disciplines, the art of memory is the most visible and the most explored one.

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<sup>226</sup> Morlok, "Visual and Acoustic Symbols," 26.

### 2.3. Transformation of the Art of Memory

The ancient mnemonic skill was based on imagining the *loci*, where the arbitrarily invented images would be placed. In that way, an individual was able to retrieve the placed, and memorized images when they needed them, mainly in delivering speeches. Camillo's Theatre also promised the practical application of the acquired knowledge in oral delivery or writing.

*"O most Christian, most happy King Francis, these are the treasures and riches of eloquence Your Majesty's servant, Giulio Camillo sets froth for you. These are the paths you will ascend to immortality. Through these will you be able to rise to such height that the other kings of the world will lose their sight if they wish to look upon you, not in the Latin enterprise alone, but also the French muses will be able through these ornaments to walk as equals with the Greeks and Romans. Long live Your Highness in pure felicity, and lacking any thing among ornaments of your most high genius, the great work I lay before you will most certainly bring it unto you."*<sup>227</sup>

The application of the information and vocabulary gathered from the volumes behind the images was, according to Wenneker, presented by Camillo to king Francis I:

*"(...) a letter from Muzio contains a description of Camillo's first interview with the French King in which he demonstrated how the Theatre worked. When the King asked where he had found the 'words in his book' to express what he had demonstrated (...), Camillo found the places and showed them to him. He then chose the subject of hunting, and the King took the volume in hand and found the necessary words to speak competently and eloquently of hunting."*<sup>228</sup>

At the first sight, the order, or better to say the disposition of the images in the Theatre, is based on the traditional art of memory: the impressive *images* are placed in the fixed *loci*. Camillo, the legend says, dictated *The Idea of the Theatre* to his close friend Girolamo Muzio, during the period of seven mornings in 1543. That seems fascinating regarding the system since it means that the composition was clear and retained in Camillo's memory in such detail. Facilitating aspect to the memorization of the images was the usage of the same images on different horizontal levels to signify different aspects in terms of creation and realization, but always under the same governing planet, i. e. column in the Theatre. Also, there is certain

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<sup>227</sup> Robinson, *A Search*, 190-191.

<sup>228</sup> Wenneker, *An Examination*, 81.

automatism in the proliferation of the meanings in the correspondence with the images found in different places in the scale.<sup>229</sup> Camillo justifies the usage of same images on different levels by not wanting to burden the memory (*“per non aggravar la memoria di diverse imagini in cose medesime, facciamo che si rivegga la medesima figura sotto diverse porte”*).<sup>230</sup>

*“One has to be somewhat surprised that Neptune, who was under the Banquet, is seen again under the Cave, beneath the Sandals of Mercury and Prometheus; this will also occur in other images in this and in other planets, because Homer also says that Ulysses has seen Hercules both among the gods in heaven and in hell, which, if not contradictory to him, should be less contradictory for us, who in order not to overload the memory by different images in the same things, make one see the same figure again under different doors.”*<sup>231</sup>

Camillo used a limited number of images, resembling thus to the limited number of alphabetic letters, which in different contexts enable compositions of different meanings. In his defence and a further explanatory treatise of the Theatre, the *Trattato dell'imitatione*, he wrote that the idea of the Theatre can be compared to an alphabet, as Wenneker pointed out. If we would imagine that there was no alphabet and one was asked to create the number of signs or symbols by which “everything in the world could be expressed”, that would for sure seem ridiculous.<sup>232</sup>

*“I know well that these my words will produce wonder and make men incredulous so that effect not reach sense; however, I beg them who read this part, to be content with an example I shall give, so clear that it may well give an indication of the truth. Pay attention, I pray. Before the twenty-two letters of our alphabet were discovered, if anyone had offered to give twenty-two characters with which could be noted down all our thought, by which everything we talk could be written down, would he not have been mocked? And yet we see that these few letters comprising the alphabet are sufficient to express everything, and of the proof that it is everything, the mischief they write makes manifest faith. (...) Before the predicaments of Aristotle had been seen, who would even have believed that everything in heaven, on earth, and in hell could be reduced to ten principles? And yet they exist, and all can see, read and know for themselves that a mere ten are enough. Will it appear similarly to these my calumniators if I volunteer to give all human concepts and everything that can be spoken of in a sufficient figure?”*<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'idea del Theatro*, 22.

<sup>230</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'idea del Theatro*, 22. Burdening the memory, according to Rossi, was also one of Agrippa's objections to the artificial art of memory. Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, 2.

<sup>231</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 245.

<sup>232</sup> Wenneker, *An Examination*, 56.

<sup>233</sup> Camillo, *Treatise on Imitation*, 192-193.

Thus, the Theatre is imagined to be a sort of alphabet, which implies the possibility to rearrange the “boxes” according to one’s needs. That implication is enforced by Bolzoni as well, who says that the “boxes” could be moved like on a chessboard.<sup>234</sup> The analogy of the art of memory with the letters of the alphabet is also written in the *Ad Herennium*:

*“The artificial memory includes backgrounds and images. By backgrounds I mean such scenes as are naturally or artificially set off on a small scale, complete and conspicuous, so that we can grasp and embrace them easily by the natural memory (...). An image is, as it were, a figure, mark, or portrait of the object we wish to remember (...). Those who know the letters of the alphabet can thereby write out what is dictated to them and read aloud what they have written. Likewise, those who have learned mnemonics can set in backgrounds what they have heard, and from these backgrounds deliver it by memory. For the backgrounds are very much like wax tablets or papyrus, the images like letters, the arrangement and disposition of the images like the script, and the delivery is like the reading.”*<sup>235</sup>

Bolzoni emphasized the possibility of a different reading, that the mechanism can function independently by generating new meanings due to the movement and combinations of its components. That way of reading brings us closer to Lull’s combinatorial art, which was a method to enable the production of new combinations and new knowledge.<sup>236</sup> The revival of Lull’s art in the Renaissance was, according to Rossi, due to an increasing “interest in the Cabala and hieroglyphic writing, artificial and universal languages, the search for the primary constitutive principles of all possible knowledge, the art of memory and a preoccupation with logic understood as a ‘key’ to the hidden secrets of reality.”<sup>237</sup> The *ars combinatoria* was used as “a technique of artificial memory” and different visual representations, as “trees, wheels, and tables of the art were conceived as instruments of a memorative logic” and “the idea of a

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<sup>234</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’Idea del Teatro*, 22.

<sup>235</sup> Harry Caplan, trans. *Ad Herennium*, III, 16 (29)- 17, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Rhetorica\\_ad\\_Herennium/3\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Rhetorica_ad_Herennium/3*.html). See also, Wenneker, *An Examination*, 10.

<sup>236</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’idea del Teatro*, 22,23.

<sup>237</sup> Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory* , 29.

memorative logic was closely related to encyclopaedic interpretations of Lull's 'tree of sciences' which transformed many Lullian commentaries into true encyclopaedias."<sup>238</sup>

Camillo, stated Paolo Rossi, was knowledgeable in the Lullian Art, and we know it "from the personal testimony of Girolamo Ruscelli, who in 1594 recalled that "Giulio Camillo... told me that he had made a long study of this art of Raimondo"<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, Rossi wrote that Jacques Gohory, in his *De usu et mysteriis notarum*, named Camillo as one of the greatest commentators and followers of Lull.<sup>240</sup> Lullian art was based on a conviction that there were "certain principles or categories which were self-evident and common to all sciences in the sense that without this structure there could be no philosophy or any other science."<sup>241</sup> Lull's rotating wheels of letters, signifying different terms, offered a number of combinations through which it was promised one could embrace all knowledge. Therefore, we could suppose that Camillo applied and developed general Lullian principles of certain categorization and combinations in the Theatre.<sup>242</sup>

The images were supposedly designed in a way to contain in themselves the power to activate the memory through the network of associations.<sup>243</sup> The images would evoke the experiences of the soul while descending. The idea was to reach the invisible through the similitude with the visible things.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 88-89. "Between the mid-fifteenth century and the mid-sixteenth century, Nicolaus Cusanus, Cardinal Bessarion, Pico della Mirandola, Lefevre d'Étaples, Charles de Bovelles and later Bernardo Lavinheta, Henricus Cornelius Agrippa and Giordano Bruno disseminated and commented on the works of Lull dealing with the ars magna and combinatoria, and initiated what was to become an intellectual obsession in European culture." Ibid., 29.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Victor, "The Revival of Lullism at Paris," 522.

<sup>242</sup> André Chastel described Camillo's Theatre as the culmination of Lull's combinatory art in the Renaissance. André Chastel, "Histoire de la Renaissance," *École pratique des hautes études, 4e section, Sciences historiques et philologiques. Annuaire 1971-1972* (1972): 456.

<sup>243</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idea del Theatro*, 99.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 18-19.



The mnemonic abilities, together with knowledge, understanding, thought and imagination are placed in the context of inner man and soul on the level of Gorgons.<sup>245</sup> Under the column of the Moon on the fourth level, we find the Cup of Bacchus symbolizing the oblivion of the soul while descending. Therefore, the soul recalls, evokes the knowledge it has in the heavenly realms, but which in the inferior world has difficulties to “open clear”. As Yates said, “Camillo’s view of memory is fundamentally Platonic.”<sup>246</sup> Thus, I believe that the classical art of memory in the Theatre transforms into an art of recalling. This feature of the Theatre, according to Rossi,

*“anticipated the unprecedented development of the ars reminiscendi in the seventeenth century, which (under the influence of cabalistic doctrines) brought together two closely related ideas: that of a ‘universal machine’ or ‘key’ to reality, and that of an organic and ordered collection of all intellectual notions and natural phenomena In Camillo’s work the use of images in the art of memory was linked to the ancient magical-alchemical theme of a secret knowledge.”*<sup>247</sup>

The power of words and rhetorical figures are for Camillo, to my understanding, the tools for the most precise and direct ascension to deeper cognition of the divine mind and divine purpose, mentally passing through and repeating the act of creation. The imitation of the divine method would result in re-creating the world, the universe, by means of words. Words could be, therefore, incarnated through the knowledge and skillful use of rhetoric. Camillo’s imagery would have inspired and opened the gates to the magical and alchemical foundations of the secret knowledge, which is hidden in the memory of the individual souls from the very beginning of the creation. And the art of recalling becomes “an instrument of the prophet and the magus.”<sup>248</sup>

*“Now if the ancient orators, wishing to place from day to day the parts of the orations which they had to declaim, committed them to frail places as frail things, it is right that we, wishing to*

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<sup>245</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 315.

<sup>246</sup> Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 37.

<sup>247</sup> Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory*, 74.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

*perpetuate eternally the eternal nature of all things, which may be clothed from the oration on with the eternal of the oration itself, find them in their eternal places.*"<sup>249</sup>

The purpose of the images was to awaken the observer's memory, but also to transform their soul. The transformed, or maybe better to say transmuted soul would be able to easily recognize the invisible connections in the universe, and to elevate to its place of origin. The secrets are being revealed and then covered by appropriate symbols, not to be profaned,<sup>250</sup> but to serve the self-conscious individual, who is provided with the higher knowledge, to operate in the world through the full knowledge of all required arts and skills. These images would give to an individual an insight, understanding, and they would activate their abilities. Therefore, the device was not only to provide an observer with the universal knowledge but, through getting the knowledge, one was to experience an alchemical transformation of their own being, purification and transmutation of the soul and ascension toward their true selves, perfect selves, which was forgotten in soul's descension to this world.

The idea of elevation to God had, in the first place, magical endeavours, but it had as one of the consequences the development of encyclopedic systems.<sup>251</sup> The idea which arose in the fourteenth century was about finding the *clavis universalis* that opened the doors for all-encircling knowledge.<sup>252</sup> The universal key was searched for in the logical order and human memory. The memory was now seen as connected to divine, creative powers. In order to support these great claims and aims of the Theatre, the images should have been archetypal, and not arbitrary, so that the images could have had the power to lead the spectator to the expected

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<sup>249</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 203-205.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>251</sup> Bolzoni, and Camillo, *L'idea del Teatro*, 20. For further elaboration of encyclopedic development in the sixteenth century, in connection with emblems and Camillo's Theatre, see Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, "Giulio Camillo's Emblems of Memory," 47-56.

<sup>252</sup> Bolzoni, and Camillo, *L'idea del Teatro*, 17.

results. Camillo in this sense deemed his images to be archetypal<sup>253</sup> and not arbitrary.<sup>254</sup> His methodology to prove this was by providing the sources for them in the Hermetic writings (Hermes Trismegistus), Scriptures, ancient philosophy (Plato), Neoplatonic writers (Origen, Iamblichus, Plotinus), ancient poets (Homer, Euripides, Vergil), and the Kabbalistic writings (*Zohar*, *Kabbala Denudata*). In few cases, he invented images and justified them by meaningful details found in his sources.<sup>255</sup> That Camillo was confident in his choice of archetypal images is clearly visible in the narrative, as when he says “they rouse our memory to find beneath the doors thus decorated, all of the operations placed below, around the levels.”<sup>256</sup> Camillo combined the same or similar symbols from different traditions and sources into one great mosaic picture, with the composite, yet universal meaning. He used them as a universal language, understandable to all, while secret knowledge remains hidden within symbolic meaning, for more trained spectators.<sup>257</sup>

The visualizations, the images, employed in the Theatre need to be understood as “bridges” between the worlds. They serve, to my understanding, as a sort of pictograms to translate heavenly recalling into earthly visible expressions by means of rhetorical *figures*. The

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<sup>253</sup> Cf. “If we consider things as they fit and correspond to their exemplar, which we call idea, according to which God established them, they are called true. An image of Hercules is called true when it corresponds to the true Hercules.” Pico della Mirandola, *On Being and the One*, 56.

<sup>254</sup> See also Bolzoni, “The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo: Alchemy, Rhetoric and Deification in the Renaissance,” 69.

<sup>255</sup> “The Young Girl with hair raised toward the Heavens is created by us, (...)” Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 265.

“Mars on the Dragon is created by us for this reason.” Ibid., 267.

“The two openings of the Lyre we have created by necessity and for this reason: that nature has made the ears of the animals, and principally man, with tortuous passages, suitable to receive the air struck by any sound, inasmuch as it contorts in the manner of water struck a stone. (...)” Ibid., 269.

The image of the Young Girl’s whose hair was cut. Ibid., 287.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>257</sup> Pico della Mirandola considered the images used by the ancient fathers were archetypal as well: “The early Fathers could not properly represent some things by the images of others unless trained, as I have said, in the hidden alliances and affinities of all nature. Otherwise, there would be no reason why they should have represented this thing by this image and another by another, rather than each by its opposite.” Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 79.

visualizations were there to evoke hidden meanings in things.<sup>258</sup> The observer could experience their soul's journey, which would remind them of the true origin of the soul, through the method of recalling in their minds various grades or *loci* through which the soul is descending into this world. In fact, we can say that the Theatre had a double motion effect, namely that the soul of the observer was ascending while recalling her own descending. Ernst Gombrich affirms that the usage of symbols, "enigmatic images", should be interpreted as a method for leading a soul up "the ladder by which we ascend to the Divine."<sup>259</sup>

It seems reasonable to conclude that the Theatre was a silent device, at least until after experiencing the benefits of it, when an individual would have started to deliver speeches composed from their awakened memory, following the presented rhetorical rules. Nowhere in *The Idea of the Theatre* Camillo mentions the "spectator" talking or doing anything, in that matter. Corrado Bologna interestingly described the mental or spiritual process a spectator was to go through while looking at powerful images: a spectator is looking at the images with the "eyes of his mind"<sup>260</sup> and contemplates their allegorical meanings. By "imitation-identification with the characters and painted subjects" a spectator undergoes the process of transformation.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Elke Morlok emphasized the central place of the visual representations in Kabbalah. Morlok stated that, according to Scholem, a symbol is "a representative of an occult, hidden entity or process, which is not revealed by itself and which cannot be expressed directly." Morlok, "Visual and Acoustic Symbols," 21.

<sup>259</sup> Ernst H. Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae: The Visual Image in Neo-Platonic Thought," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 11 (1948): 167.

<sup>260</sup> In Camillo's words, to get the cognition of these "real things", one should "abandon the senses" and use the "sharpness of the mind" (*d'adoperare l'acutezza della mente*). Camillo, *De transmutatione*, in: Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idea del Teatro*, 289-290.

<sup>261</sup> Bologna, "Le retour des dieux anciens", 116.

Camillo, presumably, believed that the senses, such as sight<sup>262</sup> and means, such as language, were given to enable humans to reach back to their divine origin. But, understanding the limits of the language, Camillo must have concluded that different rhetorical solutions, like figures of speech, would overleap, let us say transcend, the gap between our and supercelestial worlds:

*“Then, with what is holy belonging to the supercelestial world, which is separated from us by the mass of all the heavens, and our language being unable to express that, except (I should say) through signs and similes, we, therefore, ascend by the means of things visible to those things invisible.”*<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> “St. Thomas, wishing to prove the “active intellect” to be in us, if I remember correctly, gives the example of our visual power, and of that ray of fire, that within us responds to the eye. Very often when we rub each of our eyes with a finger, we see internally the likeness of a wheel of fire. By the blazing of this wheel, it often happens, that wide awake and opening our eyes in the dark night a very little bit, we can see and discern some things in a room. This wheel, weakening then, little by little, loses its strength. Therefore, as in single eye we have to ability to see, the seeing and the wheel which makes us see, so there is in us, not only intellect, which can understand, namely the intelligence or the intellectual capacity, which we mean to call it, and the aforementioned understanding which is the “practical intellect”, but also the “active intellect”, namely that which makes us understand.” Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 301.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 199.

### CHAPTER 3: BRIEF COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF THE SEVEN LEVELS

*“Thus, there are reflections of the incorporeals in corporeals and of corporeals in incorporeals – from the sensible to the intelligible cosmos, that is, from the intelligible to the sensible. Therefore, my king, adore the statue because they, too, possess forms from the intelligible cosmos.”*<sup>264</sup>

The concept of the whole universe as divided into the three worlds was common for Neoplatonists and Kabbalists.<sup>265</sup> Giorgi and Agrippa emphasized the proportions and numbers of microcosm and macrocosm using the Vitruvian figure.<sup>266</sup> For Giorgi, the “Vitruvian theory of architecture (...) had a religious significance connected with the Temple of Solomon.”<sup>267</sup> Camillo was, according to Bolzoni, to great extent, indebted to Pico’s philosophical and theological expositions, especially Pico’s *Heptaplus*,<sup>268</sup> which is the allegorical interpretation of the creation of the world. Pico’s three-worlds division, the “ultramundane” (light, angelic, intelligible, eternal), the “celestial” (compound of light and darkness, stabile), and the “sublunar” (darkness, alternation of life and death),<sup>269</sup> corresponds to Camillo’s worldview:

*“Solomon, in the ninth chapter of Proverbs, says that ‘Wisdom hath built herself a house,’ and founded it upon seven columns. These columns, which symbolize the most stable eternity, we must understand as being the seven Sephiroth of the Supercelestial world, which are the seven measures of the structure of the Celestial and the Inferior; in these are included the Ideas of everything Celestial and Inferior. It is impossible to imagine anything not included in this number.”*<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, C.H. XVII, 62.

<sup>265</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’idea del Teatro*, 148, fn.4.

<sup>266</sup> The Vitruvian figure is interesting to mention in the current context, because Camillo’s Theatre was, apparently, inspired by Vitruvian architecture. Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’idea del Teatro*, 154, fn. 4. Bologna, “Le retour des dieux anciens” 122. Erna Banić-Pajnić, “Nauk o korespondenciji mikrokozmosa i makrokozmosa u hrvatskih filozofa.” [Doctrine of microcosmic and macrocosmic correspondences in Croatian philosophers]. *Prilozi za istraživanje hrvatske filozofske baštine* 44/2 (88) (2018): 314.

<sup>267</sup> Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, 34.

<sup>268</sup> Additionally, Bolzoni discovered an intriguing note in which had been written that Camillo “owned a manuscript by Pico entitled ‘La Chiave delle Scienze’ (the Key to the Sciences)” and that he “drew his theatre and his idea from there.” Bolzoni, “Giulio Camillo’s Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah,” 20-21. Bolzoni, “The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo: Alchemy, Rhetoric and Deification in the Renaissance,” 71.

<sup>269</sup> Szönyi, “The Hermetic Revival in Italy,” 58-59.

<sup>270</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 201.

The “structure” of the Theatre is an “imitation of the celestial”,<sup>271</sup> by using number seven “in order to come to the first order,” and, Camillo continues, Kabbalists say that Moses<sup>272</sup> “passed seven times through the seven Sefirot” but he never passed the Binah. This is because the Binah is the highest level up to which human intellect can ascend. Thus, Moses “climbed seven times seven times, which is forty-nine, the number of the remission.” Also, the Lord’s Prayer in the Hebrew language written by Matthew has 49 words.<sup>273</sup> Therefore, Camillo, “following the suggestion of these ascents,<sup>274</sup> (...) established seven doors (*porte*), either levels (*gradi*) or distinctions (*distintioni*),”<sup>275</sup> about which he plans to speak under each planet. First and second Sefira, Kether, the Crown, and Chokmah, the Wisdom, seemingly cannot be accessed by humans. Camillo, thus, reduced the number of Sefirot from ten to eight, up to Binah, the Understanding. Camillo excluded the highest two Sefirot from the starting horizontal level with the justification that these two Sefirot are “beyond the comprehension of even the most blessed intellect,”<sup>276</sup> and to further fit eight Sefirot into number seven, he merged two Sefirot into one. However, Camillo included Chokmah in the Theatre, which covered as a symbol the whole second level, the Banquet. Nevertheless, he needed to fit his ideas into the grid of seven times seven. Seven times seven, resulting in number forty-nine reflects the gates Moses had to go through in order to gain true understanding and knowledge hidden in Genesis. Pico’s *Heptaplus* is divided into seven parts, of which each has seven chapters, and corresponds to “the seven days of creation.”<sup>277</sup> Finally, *Heptaplus* also comes up with the number 49. Crofton

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>272</sup> Pico said that the Scripture written by Moses are in fact the “image of the world”, after it was revealed to him at the mountain. Moses, Pico says, “was commanded to make everything according to the pattern that he had seen on the mountain.” Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 79.

<sup>273</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 209.

<sup>274</sup> “l’ombra di queste salite” (the shadow of this ascent). Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 209, 211.

<sup>276</sup> Radcliff-Umstead, “Giulio Camillo’s Emblems of Memory,” 50.

<sup>277</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 84.

Black points out Pico's references to the jubilee, "He who knows in kabbalah the mystery of the gates of understanding will know the mystery of the great jubilee."<sup>278</sup> This "*numeratio* has fifty gates, which are called the gates of understanding, all of which God (holy and blessed) handed down to our learned Moses, except one."<sup>279</sup> These gates of understanding are the steps of the ascent of the intellect. Each gate ought to reveal the secrets of creation, "revealing their force and origin", of each thing, such as minerals, trees, animals, fish. Black quotes Moses ben Nahmanides:

*"This series leads up to the creation of possessors of a speech-giving soul, enabling him to contemplate the secret of the soul and know her essence and her force in her palace... (...) For in every one of these there is one gate of wisdom which is not like the wisdom of the other. Their number was traditionally known to them, peace be unto them, to be fifty less one. It is possible that this gate concerns the knowledge of the Creator; blessed shall He be, which has not been transmitted to any created being."*<sup>280</sup>

What Moses was given on Mount Sinai were "the forty-nine gates of understanding that represented the approach to the knowledge of the entire taxonomy of created things."<sup>281</sup> I would suggest that one of the layers in the Theatre might hold the mystery of these doors of understanding. Furthermore, Egidio of Viterbo, explicating the mysterious Kabbalistic truths, also established that Moses could not pass the fiftieth Gate of Understanding at the Sefira Binah, but that his ascension ends up after the forty-nine lower Gates. "Moses did not get the prize."<sup>282</sup> In Egidio's ascending marathon, the apostle Paul reached the Wisdom, the second Sefira Chokhmah.<sup>283</sup> Camillo did not wish to reveal the mystery of his chosen number:

*"(...) there are no more than three hundred and forty-three Governors, and of these Governors, forty-nine Captains, and of the Captains only seven Princes. I remain silent on the many hidden*

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<sup>278</sup> Pico della Mirandola *Conclusiones*, 96, in: Crofton Black, *Pico's Heptaplus and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2006), 226.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>280</sup> Nahmanides in: Ibid, 229.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>282</sup> Copenhaver and Stein Kokin. "Egidio Da Viterbo's Book on Hebrew Letters," 16.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 17.



*secrets in great number; I refrain from performing those wonders that embarrassment and modesty will not at present allow me to reveal.*"<sup>284</sup>

On the first level, we find things that are preceding the others. The following levels contain accounts of things which in a certain manner chronologically follow the others, so on the seventh level, the last one, will be the arts, since they were found by humans last; i. e. humans are at last capable of founding arts and skills after their whole journey of the soul through previous levels of recalling. While the usual topics of syncretism were monotheism, the trinity and the creation,<sup>285</sup> Camillo was focused on the creation in his Theatre. The steps in the creation of the world in Camillo's system are interconnected with the interpretations of the Biblical account of creation, Lullian ladders of ascent and descent, Platonic ideas on the creation, and the Kabbalistic accounts on genesis. Camillo also included the idea of hierarchy with the idea of chronology, meaning that the upper levels are subordinated or results of the previous levels. He describes it in the following words:

*"So that we give order (so to speak) to the system with such ease that we make the scholars into spectators, let us put them in front of the aforementioned seven measures supported by the columns of the seven planets in this tableau, or we should say, this theatre, distinguished by its seven levels. Because the theatres of old were arranged so that on the level closest to the orchestra sat the most important spectators, then successively, on the ascending levels sat those who were of lesser importance, so that the artisans sat on the top level, the closest levels, in this way, were assigned to the more noble because of the nearness of the scene (...). Following the order of the creation of the world, we shall place on the first levels the more natural things, either the more worthy, or those we can imagine to have been created before all other things by divine decree. Then we shall arrange from level to level those that followed after, in such a way that in the seventh, that is, the last and highest level shall sit all the arts and properties that fall under these canons, not by reason of unworthiness, but by reason of chronology, since these were the last to have been found by men."*<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Robinson, *A Search*, 193.

<sup>285</sup> Walker, "Orpheus the Theologian," 109.

<sup>286</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 211.

### 3.1. First Level – Three Worlds

The first level represents the three worlds, the supercelestial, the celestial, and the inferior worlds.<sup>287</sup> It contains threefold symbolism. In the Inferior world the planets are represented in the form of mythological gods, in the Celestial world they are heavenly bodies and in the Supercelestial world, there are Sefirot and Archangels. Each door of the first level is symbolized by one Sefira, except for the level of Venus where there are two Sefirot. The planets represent the “divine foundations of the whole and the traditions related to gods.”<sup>288</sup> The symbols of anthropomorphic planets follow the traditional way of depiction. They serve as instruments for the classification and arrangement of the whole world.

Camillo’s symbols upon the first horizontal level are, as he says, or more worthy or created before the other things, meaning the Sefirot, angels and planetary deities. Yet, upon the fourth door of the first level, that should host the Sun, Apollo, there would be four images from the second level named Banquet. In reverse, the Sun, due to its highest properties, would be depicted on the level of the Banquet in the image of Divinity, as “the Breadth of Being” (*latitudine de gli Enti*<sup>289</sup>).<sup>290</sup> Camillo changed the place of the Sun to emphasize the supremacy of the Sun over other planets:

*“Therefore, on the first level, they shall see seven dissimilar doors, for each planet in human form shall be painted upon the door of the column allotted to them, except that allotted to the sun. Since that is the most noble place of all the theatre, we would like that Apollo, which should by right be depicted on the same level as the others, to sit at the banquet of the Breadth of Being, which is the image of Divinity. Then beneath the door of each planet shall be preserved all things appertaining to the corresponding measure of the supercelestial; in the same way, to those things that pertain to the planet itself and to the legends of the Poets about it.”*<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Cf. Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 75-76.

<sup>288</sup> Also in: Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’idea del Theatro*, 20.

<sup>289</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 210.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 211, 213.

Under the Sun on the first level, Camillo employed the image of Pan,<sup>292</sup> instead of Apollo, to represent the three worlds.

*“In that place one shall see a representation of Pan, which therefore, with its head symbolizes the supercelestial, with its horns of gold which point upward, and with his beard, the celestial influences, and with his starry hide, the celestial world, and with his goat legs, the inferior world. Beneath this figure the three worlds shall be symbolized.”*<sup>293</sup>

I am inclined to believe that there is an implied and not easily understandable reason for this change between the levels,<sup>294</sup> perhaps numerical. Unfortunately, a proper numerical comparative analysis would surpass the limits of the current thesis.

Camillo’s interest and knowledge in Kabbalah are exhibited throughout the *Theatre*. Furthermore, François Secret found the name of Giulio Camillo in the context of Kabbalah in “one whole series of works,” but interestingly, Secret discovers that Camillo is not mentioned by authors who disapprove of Kabbalah.<sup>295</sup> What are Camillo’s sources and teachers in his learning of Kabbalah, other than the *Zohar* mentioned in the *Theatre*, is still an open question. However, looking more closely at the Kabbalistic understanding of and systems developed by several contemporary Christian Kabbalists, the similarities between the authors will beg for future deeper investigations of Camillo’s Kabbalistic connections and influences.

The Sefirot diagram, meaning the arrangement of Sefirot, is also called the Tree of Life. It is imagined as a model of the Universe, “the template of all the world, carrying within in a

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<sup>292</sup> Possible sources for the symbol of Pan (Plato, Servius and Giorgi) and other occasions in which Camillo discussed Pan (*Interpretatione dell'arca del patto, De l'humana deificatione*), see in: Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idea del Teatro*, fn.1, 157.

<sup>293</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 213.

<sup>294</sup> Robinson interestingly suggested that the change might have been made to accommodate the Earth among the planets, i. e. that the four images (Pan, the Golden Bough, the Fates and the Pyramid) represent the Earth. Additionally, she suggested the spiral movement for the planets laying upon the Seven Pillars of Wisdom. Robinson, *A Search*, 158, 161.

<sup>295</sup> Secret, *I Cabbalisti Cristiani*, 279.

recurring system of order.”<sup>296</sup> This model provides us with the knowledge of analogy and cosmic correspondences. It is ought to be the archetypal pattern. The “flow of Creative light” in the Tree of Life is as follows: Kether – Hokhma – Binah – Hesed – Gevurah – Tiferet – Netzah – Hod – Yesod – Malkhut. This structure is “based on the emanations flowing down from the first Crown.”<sup>297</sup> Camillo follows the general Kabbalistic order in this aspect. The Sefirot diagram was also assigned to the body parts of a human being.<sup>298</sup> This type of correlation might have been the initial step in the development of Camillo’s Idea, when he planned to create a system symbolized by the human body instead of the form of theatre.<sup>299</sup> Kabbalists, having in mind the cosmic correspondences, “formulated the Tree in terms of the Greco-Roman Gods and their corresponding planets. This enables the Tree to be viewed in wider vision using the myths about the Gods to describe the Sephiroth.”<sup>300</sup>

In the diagram of Sefirot, it seems impossible to encompass the wholeness, the beginning, and the end by excluding the highest two Sefirot. This limitation would have, in a way, confirmed Camillo’s exclusively utilitarian and pragmatic worldview. Yet, Camillo included Hokhmah upon the whole second level, Banquet, behind the symbol of Oceanus, as I have said above. “The Sephira of Hochma,” according to Halevi, “is traditionally filled by Zodiac. This is the band around the sky centred on the path of the Sun. Besides enclosing the orbits of all the other planets, the Zodiac defines twelve phases of a continuous cosmic

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<sup>296</sup> Z’ev ben Shimon Halevi, *Tree of Life: An Introduction to the Cabala* (Rider, London Melbourne Sydney Auckland Johannesburg, 1991), 14.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 30, 31.

<sup>298</sup> Tiferet, thus, represents the heart, Hesed the right arm, Gevurah the left arm, Yesod represents the genitals, Netzah is the right leg and Hod the left leg, and the Malcut stands for Elements. Binah and Hokhmah are usually described either as palms of the raised hands or simply being placed to both sides of the head. Ibid., 35.

<sup>299</sup> Initially, Camillo’s idea was to make the memory structure in the form of the human body, Wencker, *An Examination*, 57-58. Liruti, *Notizie*. 79. Camillo in his letter to Marcaantonio Flaminio, late 1520s, wrote that first he had considered the ancient mnemonic models, like house (Cicero) or zodiac (Metrodorus), but finding the human body to be the most suitable form for his edifice. Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory*, 212-213. Yet, later he decided it was more suitable for his cause to use the “ancient metaphorical representation of the world as a great theatre.” Radcliff-Umstead, “Giulio Camillo’s Emblems of Memory,” 50.

<sup>300</sup> Halevi, *Tree of Life*, 51.

process.”<sup>301</sup> Number twelve embody “all the human types expressed, thus forming the complete circle of Mankind.”<sup>302</sup> Hokhmah ascertains the absolute potential. The Zodiac before being contained by Binah can have any combination possible. Each of the Zodiac signs contains in itself many variations, and what we touch upon are only manifestations of these “root principles”.<sup>303</sup>

The way Sefirot are functioning is described in the following Halevi’s statement:

*“From the conversion into actual potential by the action of Hochma, the emanations are formulated into major principles by Binah, these are developed and expanded within their context by Hesed, then refined by the discrimination of Gevura into the recognizable entity of Tipheret. Netzah then sets the thing working while Hod relates it to the outside world. Yesod maintains its balance and gives it a view of itself. Malcut is what we see in its physical form when the Tree is complete, having brought the creative process down to Earth.”*<sup>304</sup>

Camillo’s planet-sefira-angel triads match, to great extent, to Giorgi’s and Agrippa’s triads. Giorgi at one instance in *De harmonia mundi totius* joined the Moon with Malcut,<sup>305</sup> but later with Yesod.<sup>306</sup> There is a difference between Giorgi and Camillo regarding the Sefirot pairs with Mercury and Venus, which can be seen in the table below. Giorgi’s planet-angel pairs are the same as Camillo’s.

In Agrippa’s system, the Sefira-Angel-Planet triads are mostly the same as Giorgi’s with the difference only in the level of Malcut: Malchut-Anima Messihae-Sphere of elements.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>305</sup> “Quoad primum influxus inferioribus communicandos: sicut Luna Deifera, quae a secretioribus Hebraeis Malcut dicitur; et nobis immediate communicat omnia: quae a superioribus canalibus imbibit iterum refundenda. Et quamvis sit ultima planetarum, connumeratur tamen cum illis, sicut Malcut cum divinis illis mensuris.” Giorgi, *De Harmonia mundi totius*, I.4.13, 71r-v.

<sup>306</sup> “Sed in eo, quod ipsa luna particularis est planeta, habet suam vim a secunda annumeratione, quae יסוד isod, idest fundamentum dicitur, et Deus vivus, vita mundi et dispositor rerum omnium (...).” Ibid., I.10.21, 183v.

<sup>307</sup> Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, II.10, (Cologne, 1533), 120-121, 128-129.

	Camillo		Giorgi		Agrippa		Pico <sup>308</sup>
<b>Moon</b>	Marcut	Gabriel	Malcut	Gabriel	Iesod	Gabriel	Malkhut
<b>Mercury</b>	Iesod	Michael	Hod <sup>309</sup>	Michael	Hod	Michael	Yesod
<b>Venus</b>	Hod, Nizach	Honiel	Nizach <sup>310</sup>	Honiel	Nezah	Haniel	Hod
<b>Sun</b>	Tipheret	Raphael	Tipheret <sup>311</sup>	Raphael	Tipheret	Rapahel	Tiferet
<b>Mars</b>	Gabiarah	Camael	Geburah <sup>312</sup>	Camael	Geburah	Camael	Din
<b>Jupiter</b>	Chased	Zadchiel	Chesed <sup>313</sup>	Zadchiel	Haesed	Zadkiel	Hesed
<b>Saturn</b>	Bina	Zaphchiel	Bina <sup>314</sup>	Zapchiel <sup>315</sup>	Bina	Zaphkiel	Nezah

Table 1. Camillo's, Giorgi's, Agrippa's, and Pico's associations of Sefirot and Angels with Planets.

The similarities are obvious, but the differences implicate that Camillo either had an additional Kabbalistic source, or he made certain innovative changes in the Kabbalistic system of the Sefirot. I was not able to find Camillo's source, influence, or like-minded scholar who would dare to place two Sefirot with one planet. The reasons for this unusual decision are still to be discovered, if there is a degree of trust that Camillo did not just recklessly and forcibly merge two Sefirot only to fit his seven-fold idea.

<sup>308</sup> Stephen A. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486): The Evolution of Traditional Religious and Philosophical Systems* (Tempe, Arizona, 1998), 541.

<sup>309</sup> Mercurius respondet secundae annumerationi particular denominatae הוד hod, quod apud nos ornatum, decorem, aut celebritatem sonat (...)." Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, I.10.21, 183v.

<sup>310</sup> "Venus aut a נצח nizach habet suam vim, quod interpretatum dicitur vincens, aut victoria, aut perpetuum, (...)." Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> "Sol autem coelorum cor cum tipheret Archetypi corde convenit: Quod pulchritudo, aut pulchrum illud intepretantur, a quo omnia pulchrituo in sanctitate, vel sanctuario eius: (...)." Ibid., 184r.

<sup>312</sup> "Mars a גבורה geburah, quod robur significat, habet robur suum (...)." Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> "Iupiter vero sic dictus, quia omnes iuvat, Semper beneficus sum illa mansione convenit, quae חסד chesed dicitur: quod misericordia, pietas, vel clementia potest interpretari: (...)." Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> "Saturnum autem reperimus suscipere quidquid habet בינה bina, quod intelligentiam sonat: ubi praecipue residere dicitur Spiritus sanctus (...)." Ibid. "(...)" aut mensura diviniatis: quae bina dicitur: cui respondet Saturnus, et intelligentia praesidens ipsi." Ibid., I.4.5, 60r-v.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., I.3.6, 44r.

### 3.2. Second Level - Banquet

“‘ Whence then arise the elements of Nature?’ And Pimander replies ‘From the Will of God, which received into itself the Word... And the Nous-God, existing as life and light, brought forth a second Nous-Demiurge, who being the god [of fire] [and] of breath (Ficino, *Deus ignis, atque spiritus numen*) fashioned the Governors, seven in number, who envelop with their circles the sensible world.’”<sup>316</sup>

The second level, the Banquet, represents the “water of wisdom” in which the ideas and the simplest elements are placed. Under each “planet” of the Banquet is one or two images. Above each Banquet door, there was an image of the Banquet that Oceanus prepared for gods, mentioned in the *Iliad*.<sup>317</sup> Proclus, as kindly pointed out by Bolzoni,<sup>318</sup> wrote a comment on the exact lines from the *Iliad*, when making a point that Plato in *Phaedrus* used the *mimesis* of Homer:

“Indeed, it is perfectly clear to anyone who has even a middling perception of this sort of doctrine that one must say, when the greatest of the gods goes to a banquet, that he is drawing his nourishment from the noetic realm and that he is returning to his own first principles and being satiated with transcendent and uniform goods from that source. And so the Ethiopians are there, radiant with divine light, and primal Ocean flowing from the noetic spring, and thence also comes satiety for the demiurgical intellect and for all the gods attached to it.”<sup>319</sup>

The volumes under the doors in the Theatre pertained to “the simplest elements, or things nearest either to the intellect or believed by authority to be subordinate to sense.”<sup>320</sup> This level is about the creation of heavens and earth and the generation thereafter. As written in Genesis 1.1: “In the beginning God created Heaven and earth.”<sup>321</sup> This creation is before the first day, according to Genesis, and for Camillo, it will denote “the mass from which they were

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<sup>316</sup> Hilary Gatti and Frances Yates, “The Notes on “Camillo and Hermes Trismegistus” in the Yates Archive at the Warburg Institute in London,” *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia, Serie IV*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2001): 176. The quotation is Yates’ version of C.H. I.9.

<sup>317</sup> *Iliad* I, 423-424.

<sup>318</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’Idea del Theatro*, fn. 2, 174.

<sup>319</sup> Robert Lamberton, *Proclus the Successor on Poetics and the Homeric Poems: Essay 5 and 6 of His Commentary on the Republic of Plato* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 237-239.

<sup>320</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 233.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

to be formed”.<sup>322</sup> God’s production is two-folded, “one from within the essence of His divinity, and the other from without.”<sup>323</sup> The production from within is that of the Word, and it is consubstantial, coessential and eternal. The Word is, therefore, intrinsic to God Himself and it does not have a beginning: “And the Word was God.”<sup>324</sup> The second production from without is the primary matter, called also Chaos, *anima mundi* or Proteus, out of which “God then drew out the heavens, the earth and all things”, and it is not coessential nor consubstantial, but made *ex nihilo*, in time.<sup>325</sup> The primary matter is not eternal, but it “has been sick already for many thousands of years and because of its many changes, it should be believed that it continues deteriorating and that it wears out. When it can go no further, Judgment Day shall follow.”<sup>326</sup> Oceanus here stands for the watery matter, “the water of wisdom”<sup>327</sup> preceding the primary matter (which is also watery),<sup>328</sup> and it symbolizes the sefira Chokmah,<sup>329</sup> the wisdom. The sefira Chokmah in the Kabbalah is “pure, undifferentiated Mind. It is pure thought, which has not yet been broken up into differentiated ideas. Wisdom is the level above all division, where everything is a simple unity.”<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 225. According to Camillo, Chokmah is watery, and Binah fiery. Ibid., 227. Cf. “This world is symbolized by water, a flowing and unstable substance; that by fire, for the splendor of its light and the elevation of its position; of a middle nature, the heavens” are composed “of the fire and water (...)” Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 75.

<sup>329</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 227, 231.

<sup>330</sup> Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah, The Book of Creation* (Boston, MA/York Beach, ME, Weiser Books, 1997), 11-12.



Camillo declared in the introduction to the Banquet that the primary matter, from which God made souls, was watery.<sup>331</sup> Gods at the Banquet are presented as “the Ideas in the divine exemplar conspiring on the one same spirit since all that which is in God is God Himself.”<sup>332</sup>

The creation is divided into two levels, one is eternal, and the other is not. The ideas and the “imprints” are eternal, while the matter itself is not. Camillo says that the Mercury’s, which is a Latinized name for Hermes Trismegistus, statement “all is immortal” is the “key”, adding that the God “fills heaven and the earth”.<sup>333</sup> To my understanding, the spirit of God is infused in all of the things, and that is what makes everything “immortal”. Not the matter itself, but the essence which is divine.<sup>334</sup> Camillo included the reference, quoted above, to pseudo-Lullian alchemical treatise the *Testament*,<sup>335</sup> where, according to Camillo, it is written that God made our souls and angels of the best part of the primary matter.<sup>336</sup>

Camillo led his elaboration to the point, at the level of Gorgons, that the human soul was immortal. He differentiated, at the current level of Banquet, Aristotelian “generation” and “corruption”, with the primary matter being subjected to “the wheel” of constant generation, meaning the “manifestation” and “concealment”, according to Hermes Trismegistus.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Camilo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 225.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. Pico stated that the divine things are accessible to our mind, which is immortal and aims to possess the divine things: “We must constantly remember that this our mind, to which even divine things are accessible, cannot be of mortal race, and will be happy only by the possession of divine things. Mind wanders here as a stranger, and approaches happiness insofar as it raises itself more and burns for divine things, having put aside concern with earthly things. The present disputation seems above all to warn us that if we wish to be blessed, we must imitate the most blessed of all things, God, possessing in ourselves unity, truth, and goodness” Pico della Mirandola, *On Being and the One*, 61.

<sup>335</sup> Wenneker, *An Examination*, fn. 18.2, 369.

<sup>336</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 219. See in Chapter 2.2.

<sup>337</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 219.

Camillo included the passage from, he said, *Pimander*<sup>338</sup>, with the important notion of the immortality of the living beings:

*“In chapter twelve of the Pimander, Mercury says: ‘If men think otherwise, their thoughts are confused by terms in use. Birth is not a beginning of life, but only a beginning of consciousness; and the change to another state is not death, but oblivion. And this being so, all the things of which every living creature is composed, ... are immortal.’”*<sup>339</sup>

The Hermetic teaching about immortality was well known to contemporary thinkers and gladly used in their philosophical systems. One of the influential Pico’s *Hermetic Conclusions* enforced this idea: “There is nothing in the universe that suffers death or corruption. Corollary: Life is everywhere: providence is everywhere; immortality is everywhere.”<sup>340</sup>

Generation and manifestation, in Camillo’s system, is a union of things that have different natures, such as water and earth. And this union is possible only due to the intervention of the spirit Christ:

*“But the truth of the generation, or of the manifestation, and of the birth of things, is that primary matter, being in every part, and things of a different nature such as water and earth taking refuge or finding themselves together; they would never be able to join together in a union, unless the spirit of Christ intervened, and entering into them, reconciled them to unfold the hidden seed of plants and flowers. One gives that explanation for the increase of matter; which then dispersing that which is dried up, evident things hide themselves and the spirit remains and lives.”*<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>338</sup>Wenneker traced the source to *Corpus Hermeticum* XII.18, which can be read in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 47. Also Cf. About the immortality of the soul *ibid.*, C.H. VIII, p. 25-26; X, p. 31-33.

<sup>339</sup>Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 219.

<sup>340</sup>Brian P. Copenhaver, *Magic in Western Culture: From Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), 219.

<sup>341</sup>Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 223. Christ as the medium between irreconcilable substances, according to Wenneker, originates from Pico. Wenneker, *An Examination*, 43-44.

### 3.3. Third Level - Cave

“And at the head of the harbor is a slender-leaved olive  
And near by it a lovely and murky cave  
Sacred to the nymphs called Naiads.  
Within are kraters and amphoras  
Of stone, where bees lay up stores of honey.  
Inside, too, are massive stone looms and there the nymphs  
Weave sea-purple cloth, a wonder to see.  
The water flows unceasingly. The cave has two gates,  
The one from the north, a path for men to descend,  
While the other, toward the south, is divine. Men do not  
Enter by this one, but it is rather a path for immortals.”<sup>342</sup>

The third level, the Cave, represents the elements of the natural world and their compounds. The name of the level refers to the Homeric cave on Ithaca, where nymphs weave linen and bees store their honey.<sup>343</sup> Porphyry, the third-century Neoplatonic philosopher wrote a treatise titled the *De antro Nympharum*, as a commentary on the 11 verses from the 13<sup>th</sup> book in *Odyssey*, the same verses Camillo uses for the development of his Cave.<sup>344</sup> The *editio princeps* in Greek language was published in Rome, 1518, edited by Janus Lascaris (ca. 1445-1535).<sup>345</sup> Bolzoni suggested that Camillo used the Latin edition from 1542, published in *Moralis interpretatio errorum Ulyssis Homericici*.<sup>346</sup>

Porphyry defined the cave as a symbol of the world, in the sense of “the generated and perceptible cosmos”.<sup>347</sup> The specific type of Nymphs, the Naiads, with their power over waters, symbolize “the general class of souls descending into γένεσις.”<sup>348</sup> Porphyry drew a direct parallel between the soul and the water. He explained how souls are imagined by the ancient

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<sup>342</sup> *Odyssey* 13, 102-112, in: Robert Lamberton, *Porphyry: On the Cave of the Nymphs* (Barrytown, New York: Station Hill Press, 1983), 21.

<sup>343</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 241.

<sup>344</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idée del Theatro*, 159, fn. 1.

<sup>345</sup> In the digitized edition Lascaris is named as “Éditeur scientifique,” and it is available in the catalogue of Bibliothèque nationale de France: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k316793w?rk=21459;2>.

<sup>346</sup> Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idée del Theatro*, fn. 2, 174.

<sup>347</sup> Lamberton, *Porphyry*, 25.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

thinkers as “settled upon the water which was ‘god-inspired’”<sup>349</sup> and that souls while descending are “hovering over the water”. He added to this the Biblical quotation “The Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.”<sup>350</sup> Porphyry pointed out Heraclitus’ saying: “It is a delight, not a death, for souls to become wet. (...) We live their deaths while they live our deaths.”<sup>351</sup> Furthermore, Porphyry emphasized that souls are pleased by falling into the matter, and they are getting wet in the process of incarnation.<sup>352</sup> He continued explicating the symbolic mystery behind Homeric verses, where these nymphs are weaving the linen. The weaving of sea-purple cloth, which is “a wonder to see” stands for the formation of the body.<sup>353</sup> In Homer’s verses, there are two gates, the northern one “was for descent”, and the southern one, which is “a path for immortals.”<sup>354</sup> The Homeric Cave described by Porphyry denotes the world, the material things, the formation of the body, and ascension and descension of the soul. Camillo’s Cave is also about the things in the material world, “because in this world we do not see each element so pure that it is not mixed.”<sup>355</sup> Camillo’s Cave is, likewise, a preparation of souls for their incarnation.

Camillo’s Cave dealt with the primary matter, that was created on the first day, and on the second day separated from the supercelestial realms by putting the heavenly mass in between the supercelestial and the inferior worlds. The “supercelestial streams which do not wet,” were separated “from the waters of this world, which do wet,” in order “that the influx of

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<sup>349</sup> In Taylor’s translation “nourished by a divine spirit”. Thomas Taylor, *Thomas Taylor the Platonist: Selected Writings*, ed. Kathleen Raine and George Mills Harper (N. J.: Princeton University Press. Princeton Legacy Library edition 2019), 303.

<sup>350</sup> Lamberton, *Porphyry*, 27. The same quotation is used by Camillo on the Banquet level. Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 227.

<sup>351</sup> Lamberton, *Porphyry*, 27.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>355</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 245.

higher waters did not rain more than might be suitable to the capacity of matter,”<sup>356</sup> as already said above.<sup>357</sup>

After the two days of the creation, according to Camillo, on the third day the waters below gathered and with their reproductive powers they became “fruitful”:

*“In the third day Moses says, that elôhiym commanded that the waters which are under the heavens be gathered together in one place, that is, all the germinative powers together, and the barren earth appear outside, so that through the above mentioned collected germinative powers, it might become fruitful. This being done, he said: ‘Let the earth produce the green herb, and the (if one may say so) ‘seed’ tree.’”*<sup>358</sup>

On the fourth day of the creation the stars were made, and they were placed in the heavenly mass Rachia. The creation of the Moon and the Sun brought about the exchange of day and night, which made possible the production of all the different animals:

*“The moon in the first, and the sun in the fourth sphere, by which one has to distinguish the light from the dark, that is, the germinative powers to produce all the diversity of animals, aquatic, as well as winged and earthly creatures here below, to differentiate from those above.”*<sup>359</sup>

Camillo reinforced the idea of creation from unity to plurality<sup>360</sup> stemming from one source by saying that clearly, all the things, mixed and simple, were formed out of the same primary matter. These things will be placed under the Cave, except man, because he was “formed separately, and made lord of all things mixed and simple”.<sup>361</sup> While human was made on the sixth day, Camillo does not specify at this point what was produced on the fifth day. On the seventh day, God rested.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 241-243.

<sup>357</sup> Pico made a very similar point on the same question of the suitability of the supercelestial streams to the inferior receptive abilities: “But the most important thing is what the doctrine of the firmament shows us, that the lower waters cannot be enriched by any gift from the upper ones without the intervention of the heavens between them.” Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 145.

<sup>358</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 243.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Bolzoni, “Giulio Camillo’s Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah,” 17.

<sup>361</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 243.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

The symbol used for *prima materia* was Proteus. Proteus can be “bound” or “unbound”. The “unbound” was placed under the Banquet of the Moon, and the “bound” was placed under the Cave of Saturn. Camillo differentiated magical<sup>363</sup> and natural binding, pointing out that his image would represent the natural binding. The explanation of the natural binding includes the reasons how and why all the things below are immortal:

*“The Spirit of Christ is that (...) which, descending by the supercelestial channels, renews with its power, all the heavens, and carries below all their impressions and all their virtues. With those it remains here below among the animals, plants and flowers. If it did not renew thus, all things would perish. (...) this is the ladder of Jacob the spirits descend and ascend, since the descending is the coming to make this renovation, and the ascending is the return of the spirit to refresh itself with the higher totality.”*<sup>364</sup>

The constant circulation of the renewing spirit makes possible the existence of the things in the inferior world. This will be the main meaning of the *anima mundi*, who is full of the “living spirit” of Christ, so that “carried below” the soul of the world “comes upon the mixture which nature wants to make, wishing to produce plants, flowers and other elemental things.”<sup>365</sup> And if the *anima mundi* was not “a mediator to reconcile the opposing qualities which make the mixture, their opposition would not allow them to remain together under the shape of this or that plant, or of that or another flower. Such is, therefore, the temperance of the divine spirit of Christ, which puts in accord again those at odds.”<sup>366</sup>

He made sure the reader understood that Christ was the central inspiring and renewing force by saying:

*“This spirit of Christ, therefore, and not of the soul of the world (as the Platonists say), is not only the mediator, conciliator, life-giver and sustenance of these four opposing elements, but moved by his compassion, it is also mediator and conciliator between divine justice and human frailty.”*<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> “I say magic, because the binding which Aristaeus makes of Proteus on the advice of Cyrene, his mother, according to Homer and Vergil, is a magic binding.” Ibid., 281.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid, 281.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

The bound *prima materia* in the mixtures of the inferior world lasts for a certain time, it stays composed due to the reconciling spirit which descends from above. Camillo quoted Mercury Trismegistus' *Asclepius* to explain further the generative power of the spirit: "All that descends from on high is generative; and that which issues upward from below is nutritive".<sup>368</sup> At some point, the mixtures start dissolving, which is "undeservedly called death". Again, Camillo would quote the passage from *Pimander*:

*"The living creatures do not die, .... but they are composite bodies, and as such, they undergo dissolution. Dissolution is not death; it is only the separation of things which were combined, and they undergo dissolution, not to perish, but to be made new."*<sup>369</sup>

Pico, similarly, after elaborating that human dignity given by God provides with the ultimate option of going back to the source where humans came from, states that substances which can go back to God are certainly immortal and eternal.<sup>370</sup> Humans, Pico reaffirms, can be "brought back to God by the motive power of grace."<sup>371</sup> To God's grace necessary for human ascension, Pico adds the free-will. Humans, according to Pico, do not ascend to the heavens due to their natural necessity, but rather "in proportion to our freedom."<sup>372</sup> Humans can have "eternal life" due to being "brought back to unity by an indissoluble bond with him who himself is One."<sup>373</sup>

At the level of Cave, under Saturn, we shall find the image of the Ark of Covenant. Camillo takes his time to describe the Ark in great detail, and it is corresponding to Pico's description of it.<sup>374</sup> Both agree that it is a symbol of the three worlds, but Camillo used it at this

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 285. Cf, Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, *Asclepius* 2, p.68.

<sup>369</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 285. Cf, Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, *C.H.* XII.16, p. 46-47.

<sup>370</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 151.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 76. Cf. Wenneker, *An Examination*, 43.

place to represent another thing because he had already assigned the three worlds to Pan under the Sun.

*“Therefore, although the three worlds come to us (as we have said) symbolized by the ark, nevertheless, by already having entrusted the meanings of these worlds to Pan, we want the ark to cover the volume pertaining to the place and all its differences. This appears to us to have been reasonably arranged, since the ark containing all three worlds consequently gives place to all things. As the ark, by containing all things, deserves the keeping of place with all its differences, so, having to give it to one of the seven planets, one cannot agree to give it to any other better than Saturn, which by a magnitude of its girth, embraces all the others.”<sup>375</sup>*

Another image, which I would like to point out, placed under the Sun of the Cave in the Theatre is the Cock and the Lion. For Camillo, both animals represent solar power, but the cock “bears in its eyes some more excellent degree of the sun; and the lion, looking into them, humbles himself before him.”<sup>376</sup> The symbolism of these two animals can be found in Pico as well. The cock, according to Pico, stands for “the divine part of our soul” that we need to feed “with knowledge of divine things as with solid food and heavenly ambrosia.”<sup>377</sup> In Pico’s description, we learn that the lion symbolizes “every earthly power”, which when looking at the cock “feels fear and awe.”<sup>378</sup>

### 3.4. Fourth Level – Gorgons

*“In truth, the soul is not destroyed by its death but is overwhelmed for a time; nor does it surrender the privilege of immortality because of its lowly sojourn, for when it has rid itself completely of all taint of evil and has deserved to be sublimated, it again leaves the body and, fully recovering its former state, returns to the splendor of everlasting life.”<sup>379</sup>*

The symbol of the fourth level is Gorgons and Camillo explained the reasons he had chosen this symbol. The Gorgons, he said, were the three sisters who were blind, but had one

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<sup>375</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 279.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid, 261.

<sup>377</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 15.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.12.17, 137.



eye which they shared to be able to see. The mystery of this symbol, according to Camillo, is based on the three parts of the soul humankind has,<sup>380</sup> where the one eye signifies the “the divine ray” which is “without and not within ourselves”.<sup>381</sup> Human eyes have the power to see, says Camillo, but the Sun, or the outer source, is what makes the seeing possible. Camillo elaborated several streams of thought (St. Thomas and Simplicius) according to which the active intellect or the divine ray may be inside or outside humans, and sides with the argument that the divine ray is outside the recipient, human intellect. He said it is according to Simplicius that the active intellect is equalized with “the divine ray, either Angelic or God Himself”, and it is outside of humans, not in them.<sup>382</sup> The eye will denote the accessibility of the divine knowledge and the possibility for unification with the divinity, not the innate possession. “It follows therefore that this “active intellect”, or divine ray is outside us, and under the authority of God.”<sup>383</sup>

The level of Gorgons was set as one of the main processes a “spectator” in the Theatre should go through: how will their soul return to God. Camillo wrote a treatise, *Lettera del rivolgimento dell’uomo a Dio*, where he elaborated the process further. There are three operations towards the soul (*tre esser le operationi verso le anime nostre*), Camillo wrote in this treatise: producing (*producere*), return or conversion (*rivolgere, conversione*), and the transit (*transito*).<sup>384</sup> God produced the soul, sent it to this world, and then the soul needs to go back to God. In the process of getting back, it needs to be made perfect. The one eye of the three sisters, Camillo claimed the authority from the “Theologi Simbolici” and Mercury Trismegistus, is the ray of God, and through it we can see all the present, past and future things.

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<sup>380</sup> Also in: *Lettera del rivolgimento dell’uomo a Dio*, 42-43.

<sup>381</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 307.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid, 303.

<sup>384</sup> Camillo, *Lettera del rivolgimento dell’uomo a Dio*, 42.

This eye will represent the “window”.<sup>385</sup> Whether this divine ray is the same one as the highest part of the soul, is not quite clear from the text itself.

Pico defined pure intellect as of angelic nature. The eyes, analogy to “mind” and “intellect”, have the power to see, but still, they need the external light to “perform the task of vision”.<sup>386</sup> Thus, the nature of the eye is to see, but it needs light<sup>387</sup> to actually see.<sup>388</sup>

The level of Gorgons will deal and contain information about the inner man, who “was the last and the most noble creature made by God in His image and likeness.”<sup>389</sup> Camillo discussed the words “image” and “likeness” to make a point that humankind has by their nature since the creation the opportunity to ascend to divinity. The same two words, stated Camillo, were commented by Trismegistus in the *Pimander*, where the image and the likeness were treated as the same things, namely, the divine level. He will quote the passage from *Pimander*:

*“The Father of all, he who is Life and Light (the first Mind), gave birth to Man, a Being like Himself. And He took delight in Man, as being His own offspring; for Man was very goodly to look on, bearing the likeness of his Father. With good reason, then, did God take delight in Man; for it was God’s own form that God took delight in. And God delivered over to man all things that had been made.”*<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Camillo, according to Bolzoni, in the *Pro suo de eloquentia theatro ad Gallos oratio*, described the Theatre as „mens fenestrata“ (mind endowed with windows). Bolzoni and Giulio, *L’Idea del Theatro*, fn.1, 38. Camillo’s Theatre, according to Bolzoni, was “a machine designed to draw from the inner soul the images which were buried there, by rendering them newly visible.” Bolzoni, “The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo: Alchemy, Rhetoric and Deification in the Renaissance,” 69. Camillo, *Lettera del rivolgimento dell’uomo a Dio*, 43.

<sup>386</sup> Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 128.

<sup>387</sup> Cf. “You must ascend to the light itself, to the rays of the father, the source from which soul – enveloped in the ample light of mind – has flowed into you.” Ficino quoting Chaldean Oracles in Michael J. B. Allen, “Transfiguration and the Fire within”, 52.

<sup>388</sup> “Let us consider the same things on the intellectual level. Intellects are eyes, intelligible truth is light, and the intellect, itself intelligible, has a kind of inner light by which it can see itself but not other things. It needs the forms and ideas of things, like rays of invisible light, for the intelligible truth to be clearly discerned. And it must not be said, as we made clear in the example of the eye, that intellects are not intelligent by nature and, like our souls, have obtained the power of intelligence accidentally. From this arises the theory of those who consider “intellect” an unworthy appellation for God. If we compare the intellect with the eye, which does not see by itself but only with the help of light, then since God is light (for light is truth) and vision is the action in which the eye comes in contact with light, God does not need this step, since He is light itself, as much more remote than the angels are from any ignorance of things as the nature of light is more distant from darkness than the eyes.” Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus*, 128.

<sup>389</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 289.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid. Cf. Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, C.H. I.12, p.3.

Yates discussed this caption in her “Notes on Camillo and Hermes Trismegistus”, and the following sentences from *Corpus Hermeticum* I, not quoted by Camillo. Yates concluded that Camillo with this passage emphasized his Hermetic mindset and his convictions in the God-given rights for Hermetic magus to operate in this world.

*“The newly created Man saw the Seven Governors and the wonderful work depending upon them and thought that he would like to make a work like that, and God said to him “You may.” The Hermetic Man has, so to speak, eaten of the Tree of Knowledge and so become like God, and with God’s approval.<sup>391</sup> Moreover, when he broke through the armature of the spheres and came down this was not a punishment but his own choice, because he saw the beautiful Nature and loved her and wished to dwell with her, although this meant taking on a corporeal body. And Nature welcomed him as a lover, smiled when she saw the God-like Man, and they lived together in a mutual embrace. Man loved his own form, which was the form of God, which he saw reflected in Nature, and she too had seen his form reflected in her. The life of Fallen Man was thus a very pleasant life, the life of a God-like magician in love with Nature.”<sup>392</sup>*

Camillo is building up the argument that humans in such a way participate in the divine Mind, that without a doubt then they can grasp the divine knowledge. At this point Camillo put forward the famous quote from the *Asclepius*:

*“Man is a marvel... Asclepius, honour and reverence to such a being! Man takes on him the attributes of a god, as though he were himself a god; he is familiar with the daemonkind, for he comes to know that he is sprung from the same source as they; and strong in the assurance of that in him which is divine, he scorns the merely human part of his own nature.”<sup>393</sup>*

Yates emphasized that Camillo, while accepting the “God-man, the creative man, the Magus-man, of Pimander”, was talking about the inner man.<sup>394</sup> Camillo’s argument about the inner man continues with the examples from the Bible and Plato enforcing the idea that the body is external to humans, like a piece of clothes, and the creation to God’s image and likeness refers exclusively to the inner man.

*“And it should be indicated that most of these times when the Scriptures mention man, they mean only inner man, which one clearly finds in the book of Moses entitled Job, which says: ‘thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, thou hast put me together with bones and sinews.’ By which words, and by that pronoun, ‘me’, one is clearly given to understand inner man to be*

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<sup>391</sup> Underlined in “The Notes”.

<sup>392</sup> Gatti and Yates, “The Notes”, 177-178.

<sup>393</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 289. Also, cf. Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 3-4.; Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, *Asclepius* 6, p. 69.

<sup>394</sup> Gatti and Yates, “The Notes”, 178-179.

*different from external man. Socrates comes to this opinion, according to Plato, in his first Alcibiades, while debating on the nature of man. As the clothing we wear is not us, but something used by us, so the body also, that is worn by us, is not us, but a thing used by us. By such a thing are the words of Moses in Genesis to be considered: 'Let us make man to our image and our likeness,' which mean nothing except inner man. And that this is true, somewhat below he adds: 'There was not a man who could work the earth.' Therefore, before, in the supercelestial, inner man was made, for whom God formed an earthly body until he could work in this world and be an instrument of the divine work.*"<sup>395</sup>

The first body given to humans, Camillo emphasized, was not "slime" which degrades but the "cream of the earth, which was virginal, because he had not yet incurred shame, as did the family of Adam after his sin. This virginal earth was called Adema, whence Adam drew his name."<sup>396</sup> Before the Fall, Adam was in "the garden of delights" (*nell' horto delle delitie*) in "two ways". In the "first way" he was in the supercelestial garden, "not in person, but in the grace of God, rejoicing in all the blessed influences."<sup>397</sup> After Adam sinned, he was driven out of the garden. But he was not "bodily" driven out, but rather "the aforementioned influences were raised there". Adam was, it seems, in the same garden before and after Fall, but he and the garden changed:

*"(...) and we declare, that Adam, before his sin, was in the virginal earth of this world. And while he lived in that without blemish, his sinful body was in the terrestrial paradise. The sin accomplished, the earth shrank with shame, and thus he came to be driven from the paradise. (...) Therefore, Adam sinning, all the Elements sinned through incurring shame. Of which, the first virginity being no more in them, one might say that for this reason Adam was said to have been chased from the terrestrial paradise."*<sup>398</sup>

Camillo's strain of thought leads to the tripartite soul elaboration, as proof, perhaps, that in the same moment and the same place we can see these different aspects which generally go under the same name. As I understood, similarly was with Adam after sinning, he was still in the same garden, with the divine influences, but after the Fall these divine rays retreated up and were harder to reach. There were also then new parts of Adam who sinned. It seems reasonable

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<sup>395</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 291.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 291-293.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., 293-295.

to suggest that one of the purposes of the Theatre was to find the key for opening the doors which would enable free flow of the supercelestial influences, in order to recover the prelapsarian direct relationship with God and the divine reality.

The soul, as Camillo's argument continues, is divisible into three parts.<sup>399</sup> The lowest part of the soul is called "Nephes". This part is "most like our body", the "living soul", part which the animals also have. The middle part of the soul is called "Ruach", the rational part, "called by the name of the spirit". The third part is called "Nessamah", "a breath", "according to David and Pythagoras, light; according to Augustine a superior share; according to Plato, Mind; according to Aristotle, the Active Intellect."<sup>400</sup> As Nephes, the lowest part, has the devil to tempt it, the Nessamah, the highest part, has God.<sup>401</sup> The middle, Ruach, can incline to one of the two other parts.<sup>402</sup> If it unites with Nephes, it will unite with the flesh, and "the flesh with the demon and the whole makes a transit and transformation into the devil."<sup>403</sup> If it detaches itself from the Nephes and unites with Nessamah, "the Nessamah which is all divine, passes into the nature of an angel, and consequently changes itself into God."<sup>404</sup> God has the authority over the Nessamah and can deny it whenever He decides to. If the Nessamah is withdrawn from

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<sup>399</sup> Bolzoni traced the origin of the doctrine about the tripartite soul to Zohar. Bolzoni also added that Camillo mentioned the doctrine in *De l'humana deificatione* and in *Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio*. Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idea del Theatre*, fn.1, 206.

<sup>400</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 295-297. Also, in *Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio*, 42. Cf. "(...) anima nostra suprema (...) quam Aristoteles intellectum agentem, Plotinus intellectum absolute, Iohannes lucem, Augustinus portionem superiorem voca; sed Moses (...) pro quo nos habemus spiraculum vitae (...)." Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, I.5.13, 93v.

<sup>401</sup> Camillo emphasized that the highest part of the soul, Nessamah, cannot sin, supporting his conviction with Plotinus' quote: "In the soul there occurs neither sin nor punishment." Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 299. Also in: *Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio*, 43: "(...) la mente, laqual è luminosaa anima in noi, in cui afferma Plotino non cader ne peccato, ne penna." Bolzoni, however, traced Camillo's change of mind in *De l'humana deificatione*. There, according to Bolzoni, Camillo said: "(...) but of this purging I will speak later (...), even though Plotinus may have believed – and I in the past along with him – that on this highest soul neither sin nor suffering could fall." Bolzoni, "Giulio Camillo's Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah," 22.

<sup>402</sup> Cf. Pico "(...) two natures are planted in our souls; by the one nature we are lifted upward to the heavens, and by the other, shoved downward to the lower world; (...)." Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 10.

<sup>403</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 297.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

us, we become like beasts.<sup>405</sup> Therefore, we need the willingness, mentioned above, the help and favour of God to have and keep the Nessamah.

Giorgi's account on the same issue will correspond to Camillo's understanding of the tripartite soul. Giorgi in the *De Harmonia mundi totius* elaborated the three parts of the human soul, named them the same as Camillo: Nephes, Ruah and Nessamah. And defined them in the same way as Camillo: Nephes denotes the inferior soul, "*animam*", "*animam inferiorem*"; Ruah denotes spirit or the rational soul, "*spiritum*" (Hebrews), "*rationalem animam*" (Plotinus); and Nessamah as something divine, "*divinum quoddam*".<sup>406</sup> The highest one bears the name "*spiraculus*", meaning the breath God inbreathed in humans, and also the supreme soul, intellect, mind, light and superior share.<sup>407</sup> Giorgi also asserts that Ruah, the middle part, can adhere, as it wishes, to both extremes.<sup>408</sup> Ruah becomes worthy if it clings to the superior, and it departs from God if it unites with the inferior part: "*Meretur autem adhaerens superiori, et inferiori cohaerens a Deo se avertit.*"<sup>409</sup> Ruah, the middle soul, if it harmonizes with the superior soul, becomes worthy and joyful, but if it unites with the inferior soul, it will drag it to evil, and it will be led by a bad demon, and it will gain bad things. Thus, the middle soul, after its choice with which extreme to unite, starts to know the nature of the one it is united with.

Both cite the same Biblical place: "The word of God is living, and effectual, and more piercing than a two-edged sword; reaching into the division of the soul and the spirit."<sup>410</sup> The

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid, 303.

<sup>406</sup> Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, III.5.3, 53r. Also in Bolzoni, "Giulio Camillo's Memory Theatre and the Kabbalah," 22.

<sup>407</sup> "Anima suprema, quae intellectus, mens, lux et portio superior dicitur." Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, III.5.I, 52r.

<sup>408</sup> "Nam est medium quoddam (ut Plotino et Academicis Placet) inter animale inferius, et divinum, quod est superius, connectens utrumque, et cum utroque unibile." Ibid. And later: "Spiritus vero medius (...) cum utroque adhaerere potest ad libitum." Ibid. III.5.3, 53r.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 297. Cf. "Vivus est sermo Dei, et efficax, et penetrabilior omni gladio ancipiti, pertingens usque ad divisionem animae, et spiritus." Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, III.5.1, 52r.

middle spirit, after its choice with which extreme it is uniting, has to be separated from the other part as with the sword. The same division, logic and Biblical reference can be found in Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* as well.<sup>411</sup>

Giorgi uses the same Biblical quote as Camillo at this place as well: "I have chosen twelve of you, and one of you is a devil."<sup>412</sup> Both authors continue with the second option, namely that the human middle part chooses to unite with the, for Giorgi, good angelic spirit, for Camillo with Nessamah. Both again enforce the idea with the same Biblical quote, "Behold I send my angel",<sup>413</sup> and the same argument. Thus, this quote stands for John the Baptist who was "changed into an angel by divine providence, "after consecration" and "before generation".<sup>414</sup> Camillo will stop further discussion about the different types of spirits at this point, while Giorgi will move forward to the elaboration of the divine spirit: "The divine spirit is what the sacred and true teachers call binding, clearly binding our soul with God Himself, first made it united with His spirit, according to the Apostolic saying: One who is joined with God becomes one spirit with Him. (1 Cor. 6,17). And this is the full unity, which finally we hope to pursue."<sup>415</sup>

Furthermore, Giorgi also claims that the soul is immortal, after cleansing.<sup>416</sup> Giorgi's argument is how would it be possible that the soul is not immortal when she fills herself from and enjoys the same source of light as angels and God.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Agrippa, *Three Books of the Occult Philosophy*, trans. James Freake, ed. Donald Tyson (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2009), 581.

<sup>412</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 297. Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, III.5.2, 52v.

<sup>413</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 297. Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, III.5.2, 52v.

<sup>414</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 297. Cf. Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, III.5.2, 52v.

<sup>415</sup> "Est denique spiritus divinus, qui a sacris et veris doctoribus dicitur nexus, ligans videlicet animam nostrum cum ipso Deo, unum primo effectam cum spiritu illo, iuxta Apostolicam illam sententiam: Qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus efficitur cum eo. Et haec est consummata unio, quam denique consequi speramus." Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, III.5.2, 52v. Translated by J. Uremovic.

<sup>416</sup> "Cum expurgatis igitur mentibus agentes proponemus animam esse imortalem, (...) "Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, III.7.3, 71r.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

Camillo, and Giorgi presumably, resolved the question about the immortality of the soul as the potential which needs to be activated. All human beings have the option, the potential to activate the divine part of the soul, which is in them,<sup>418</sup> then receive the illumination from God, and that would result in immortality. Thus, if a person's middle part of the soul chooses to unite with the lowest part of the soul, that person, therefore, will not end up with the immortality gift. The aspect of who can possess the divine gift, from the Hermetic point of view, is the one who "knows himself, because 'he who knows himself goes towards himself' that is towards his true nature."<sup>419</sup> This true nature, according to Yates, refers to oneself being light and life, and only the person having intellect (mind<sup>420</sup>) can reach the point of understanding that. Hermes Trismegistus teaches that God gives two gifts to humans, in Yates' translation intellect and word,<sup>421</sup> in Copenhaver's translation mind and reasoned speech.<sup>422</sup> These two are the "same value" or are "worth as much" as immortality. If a person uses it in the right way, they are the same as immortals.<sup>423</sup> After they have left the body, "both these gifts will guide him to the troop of the gods and the blessed."<sup>424</sup>

One of the questions in the wake of the Renaissance way of thinking was what could human beings do about their existence in the world? What were their opportunities to reach their higher selves? To what degree human beings could climb up the scales leading to the

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<sup>418</sup> "Docet nam verbum Dei, ut totum affectum rationalem, qui ad spiritum pertinet, removeamus a concupiscentia, et oblectamento animali: et reducamus in Deum per illud supremum et divinum, quod Dei gratia est in nobis: cum quo uniri debet spiritus non tam affectu, sed re ipsa." Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, III.5.1, 52r.

<sup>419</sup> Gatti and Yates, "The Notes", 180.

<sup>420</sup> Copenhaver writes "mind" at the same places where Yates writes "intellect". Gatti and Yates, "The Notes", 182; Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, C.H. XII.1, 43.

<sup>421</sup> Gatti and Yates, "The Notes", 183.

<sup>422</sup> Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, C.H. XII.12, 45.

<sup>423</sup> Pico made a clear statement about the immortality question and placed it under the free-will and free-judgment concept. Human beings, according to Pico, were created nor mortal nor immortal, neither heavenly nor earthly, but their fate depends on their choice, and God's will. Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 5.

<sup>424</sup> Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, C.H. XII.12, 45.



Divinity and to what extent, or under what conditions, the Divine grace was coming down to them. God reveals himself in every part of nature, the universe is a symbol, a sign which human has the potential to read, as “a hieroglyph of revealed truth.”<sup>425</sup> Connecting the mysterious pieces from the Scriptures, ancient and Neoplatonic philosophies, Kabbalistic writings and ancient prophetic poets, the Renaissance scholar imprinted in their thought the statement by Hermes Trismegistus, mentioned above, in the *Asclepius*: „Man is a marvel”.<sup>426</sup> That will be their *spiritus movens*: a human being is much more than just the body he is clothed in. Human has the divine attributes, and these parts of human can “recognize” divine signs and there is a potential to be transformed into a divine being. That potential is drawn from the notion of the Kabbalistic tripartite human soul theory. What follows is a very important philosophical discussion about whether Nessamah, the active intellect, which would be equalized with “the divine ray, either Angelic or God himself,”<sup>427</sup> is inside or outside of a human being.<sup>428</sup> Camillo, seemingly, spent a lot of time and put a lot of effort into reaching what would be the truth about it, and settles his opinion that the active intellect, or Nessamah, is outside of a human being.<sup>429</sup> What makes this discussion important is whether human beings “own” the ability to transform themselves into divine beings or they depend on the outer, God’s willingness to provide a human with that ray that would enable them to reach the divine level. Camillo will confirm that this divine ray is “under the authority of God”.<sup>430</sup> That means that God can withdraw it whenever he finds it suitable to do it, or He can give it when he wants to give it. This important part of the *Theatre* will influence the overall understanding of Camillo’s pursuits. Camillo will,

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<sup>425</sup> Gombrich, “Icones Symbolicae”, 168.

<sup>426</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 289.

<sup>427</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 297.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., 301, 303.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 303-305.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 303.

in the end, rely on God's grace to grant him access to the higher realms. He will, however, put his greatest efforts to climb as high as possible, and trust that God will recognize his efforts as pleasing and look with the favourable eye upon his actions.

The symbol for the inner man, human tripartite soul and intellect, are Gorgons, three mythical sisters, of which only Medusa is mortal. Does Medusa represent Nephes?<sup>431</sup> If Nephes is mortal, the other two, therefore, are immortal, which does not result from what Camillo wrote in his *Idea of the Theatre*. Camillo granted immortality only to Nessamah. The topic of the immortality of the soul was developed and interwoven through the thread of several images in the Theatre. In fact, it seems reasonable to suggest that one of the multi-layered aspects in the Theatre, was the immortality of the soul, which includes: source and creation of the soul, its journey to the inferior world, coming into the body, realization in the body, and the final realization through the creation in the inferior world (through arts and sciences), as with the "prolonged" hand of God. Then the soul is ready to leave this world and return to its primary habitat.

The following table should facilitate the recognition of the distribution of images dealing with the soul specifically. Most of the images find their position across the level of Gorgons, which is the level discussing the soul and inner human. Two images are placed under the Moon and Saturn on the level of Pasiphae, thus clearly denoting incarnation and the soul's exit from the body. The logic is clear. The question arises, however, why there is not an image of a soul under the Gorgons of Mars. There is "a figure of a young girl with a barefoot and with her garment loosened,"<sup>432</sup> but here it will simply denote a sudden decision. The image under

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<sup>431</sup>Some assume that Perseus is "the divine spirit, our best genius, or a good angel" who killed the passible, closest to body and mortal part of soul, Nephes. Wenneker, *An Examination*, p. 429., Appendix D, Excerpts from Curione's commentaries to Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica*.

<sup>432</sup>Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 311.

Mars standing for the soul is placed under the Cave. Camillo's reasons for this, as it seems "change", are still to be discussed. At the Cave of Mars, we read:

*"The young girl with hair raised toward the Heavens is created by us, because according to Plato, man is a tree upside down, since the tree has its roots below and man has his above. And Origen and Jerome, his disciple, wish that when the Scripture mentions hair or beard, one should not understand the hair or beard of the body, but of the soul, (...). (...) they wish that as the tree draws to itself through its roots the nutritive moisture from the earth, so the beard and hair of our interior man should draw dew, that is, the living moisture from the influxes of the supercelestial channels, from whence comes all its strength. (...) Therefore, this image shall cover the volume appertaining to the strength which a thing may have in this world."*<sup>433</sup>

The image covered the topics of strength, and not specifically the soul. There are several images of "girls", such as a girl with her hair raised towards the heavens and a girl with her hair raised towards the heavens but cut. Of these images, only the girl with her hair raised toward heaven under the Cave of the Mars stands for soul.

Another image of the soul, on a level other than Gorgons, is the image of Europa abducted by the bull, under the Banquet of Jupiter. The image of Europa symbolizes the soul that is carried by the body, symbolized by the image of a bull:

*"Europa abducted by the bull, and carried through the sea, looking not at the region to which she is carried, but that which she has left, is the soul carried by the body through the ocean of this world, which also turn round to God and the supercelestial land."*<sup>434</sup>

Even though Europa stands for soul, the image covered the topics "pertaining to the true Christian paradise, and to all the blessed souls already departed. This is given to Jupiter because it is the planet of true religion."<sup>435</sup> This "true Christian paradise" stands as a different type of paradise to the one described under the Banquet of Venus. There would be an image of:

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 239. Camillo's further explanation of the symbol: "L'animale rationale adunque, che è nel mezo, o Signora divina, è quella Europa portata dal Tauro, cioè dal corpo, per il pelago mondano, laqual non tiene il viso dirizzato al termine, alqual il Tauro la porta, cioè al mondo; ma tiene il viso converso al termine, dal quale è portata, cioè a Dio. Questo mito ragionamento mi tirerebbe a parlar del libero arbitrio, (...). Quando l'anima si fa per la conversione compagna della mente, si dimanda se la mente tira a se l'anima, o se l'anima tira a se la mente, e conseguentemente quel divino raggio, che in lei è. E perche dissi la conversione esser chiamata ancor transito; si legge, Transivit Abraham ad Deum: e anco si legge, Deus transivit super Mosen, (...)." Camillo, *Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio*, 44.

<sup>435</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 239.

*“a sphere with ten circles, and the tenth shall be golden and full of spirits throughout, whose volume shall be on the subject of the Elysian Fields and the soul of the blessed, either having been already in this world or the world to come, according to the opinion of the Platonists and some poets. In it shall also be discussed the earthly paradise. They are assigned to Venus because of the delight and charm of such places.”<sup>436</sup>*

Thus, we can see two types of paradise, earthly and Christian. Again, Camillo uses the symbol of the soul to denote other meanings, not specifically about the soul, as he did on the level of Gorgons. Together with the images symbolizing paradise, Camillo included the images standing for purgatory and hell, as well. The images are placed upon the Banquet.

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<sup>436</sup>Ibid. 235.

1.	Banquet	Cave	Gorgons	Pasiphae	Winged Sandals	Prometheus
-	-	-	<b>Cup of Bacchus and a girl drinking from it</b> Soul going through the oblivion process while descending	<b>Girl descending through Cancer</b> <b>Diana with Mercury's garment</b> Transformation of body and soul	-	-
-	-	-	<b>Burning Torch</b> Intelligence, possible, passible intellect	-	-	-
-	<b>Sphere with 10 circles</b> Elysian fields, souls of blessed	-	<b>Eurydice</b> Emotions governed by free will: strength of the soul	-	-	-
<b>Golden Bough</b> A key to the underworld, Active Intellect	-	-	<b>Golden Bough</b> Active intellect, Nessamah, soul in general, rational soul, spirit, life	-	<b>GOLDEN CHAIN</b>	<b>Sibyl with a tripod</b> Divination, prophecy
-	<b>Hellmouth</b> Purgatory, souls waiting for salvation	<b>Girl with the hair up</b> Anthropo-morphic part of the soul; strength a thing can have in this world. Thing strong and trustworthy	<b>Girl with a bare foot and garment loosened</b> Sudden, rigid decision, without counsel	-	-	-
-	<b>Europa</b> Soul carried by the body turning toward the God and supercelestial land. Volumes about Christian Paradise, where the blessed souls already departed	-	<b>Crane</b> Watchful soul leaving the cares of this world	-	-	-
-	<b>Cybele vomiting Fire</b> Hell, lost souls	-	<b>Hercules and Antaeus</b> Volumes on impressions of the soul carrying <u>from the heaven</u> : death of the body. <u>transformation into the spirit</u> <b>Girl ascending</b>	<b>Endymion kissed by Diana</b>	-	-
<b>Moon</b>						
<b>Mercury</b>						
<b>Venus</b>						
<b>Sun</b>						
<b>Mars</b>						
<b>Jupiter</b>						
<b>Saturn</b>						

Table 2. Images in the Theatre which refer explicitly to the soul, and the soul's journey.

In this table the images pointed out refer specifically to the soul, and they are, as can be seen, mostly distributed across the level of Gorgons, with the exception of the two images upon the level of Pasiphae and one upon the Cave. These images are closely looked at in the current thesis. I added, however, to this table images symbolizing paradise, purgatory and hell, since the souls go there, or wait there for their final destination. Another purpose of the table is to point out important images placed upon the level of the Sun: The Golden Bough, the Golden Chain and Sibyl. The Golden Chain was already elaborated in the Chapter 2.1, while the logic behind the Golden Bough and the Sibyl will be explained in the final stage of this chapter.

The soul's journey is explicated upon the level of Gorgons. An influential, and "of fundamental importance"<sup>437</sup> account of the soul's journey was given by Macrobius in his commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*. Camillo, as proposed by Wenneker,<sup>438</sup> most probably followed Macrobius in his understanding of this journey. The soul descends and first goes through the process of oblivion. It drinks from the Cup<sup>439</sup> of Bacchus, "which is between Crab and the Lion,"<sup>440</sup> and "according to what the Platonists say", descends through "the door of Cancer and in returning, they ascend through that of Capricorn."<sup>441</sup> The image Cup of Bacchus is imagined as "a Zodiac in a way that in its highest and most visible part, one sees Cancer and Leo, and the cup in the middle with a virgin inclined to drink from it."<sup>442</sup> The "virgin" will denote "the soul in general", including all three parts of the soul.<sup>443</sup> If a soul did not drink a lot

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<sup>437</sup> Klibansky, Panofsky, Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 155.

<sup>438</sup> Wenneker, *An Examination*, fn. 62.2, 385

<sup>439</sup> Camillo "Tazza di Bacco", Macrobius "Crater Liberi patris". Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* Lib. II. (Lyon, 1548), 1.12, 61.

<sup>440</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 307. According to Macrobius, as long as souls are in the region of Cancer, they are considered to be "in the company of the gods, since in that position they have not yet left the Milky Way. But when in their descent they have reached Leo, they enter upon the first stages of their future condition. Since the first steps of birth and certain primary traces of human nature are found in Leo, (...)." Macrobius and Cicero, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.12.4, 134.

<sup>441</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 307.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

from the bowl of oblivion, it has better chances of recalling what it “previously knew above”.<sup>444</sup> A point of divergence from Macrobius started when Camillo positioned the Cup of Bacchus under the Moon. Macrobius’ steps through the planetary spheres began after soul’s drinking from the Bowl, and it goes from Saturn down to the Moon.<sup>445</sup> Camillo positioned the Cup upon the Moon level and drew the downward path of the soul from the Moon to Saturn. Yet, the image under the Gorgons of Saturn contained the volumes about the impressions a soul carries from heaven, such as memory, knowledge, judgment, practical intellect, which are understanding, thought, imagination, contemplation.<sup>446</sup>

Porphry, in the *On the cave of the Nymphs*, while explicating the meaning of the two gates, northern and southern, in the Homeric Cave, said that these two gates stand for Cancer and Capricorn. Souls descend through the gate of Cancer, northerly, and ascend through the gate of Capricorn, southerly. The southern gates are open for immortals, “a term which applies equally to souls, on the basis that they are immortal either in themselves or by their nature.”<sup>447</sup> Camillo learned it or from Macrobius or Porphyry when saying “the door of Cancer is called the door of men, through which the soul descends into mortal flesh. That of Capricorn is called the door of gods, in order that it returns above to the divinity, according to the nature of the animal whose sign that is.”<sup>448</sup>

Under the Gorgons of Mercury, is the image of Burning Torch, “that which Prometheus lit in heaven with the help of Pallas.” It stands for “the intelligence, that is, the ‘possible’ or

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<sup>444</sup> Macrobius and Cicero, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.12.10, 135. Cf., Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 307.

<sup>445</sup> Macrobius and Cicero, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.12.14, 136-137.

<sup>446</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 315.

<sup>447</sup> Lamberton, *Porphyry*, 33. In Taylor's translation the adjective immortal is “also common to our souls, which are per se, or essentially, immortal.” Porphyry, *On the Cave of the Nymphs in the Thirteenth Book of the Odyssey*, trans. Thomas Taylor (London: John M. Watkins, 1917), 27-28.

<sup>448</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 307. Cf. Macrobius and Cicero, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.12, 133. Lamberton, *Porphyry*, 33-34.

‘passible’ intellect, and submissiveness, whose word is to learn.”<sup>449</sup> Under Venus, behind the symbol of Eurydice who was bitten on the foot by the serpent, we learn about “emotions governed by our will, we want this to include the human will, which is one of the strengths of the soul, which divides itself into the free and the unfree. And this shall also include the Nephes,”<sup>450</sup> the lowest part of the soul. Under the Sun, behind the image of the Golden Bough, we should learn about “the “active intellect,” the Nessamah, the soul in general, the rational soul, the spirit and the life.”<sup>451</sup> Under the rule of Mars, the soul experiences certain changes in the level before, where it collects the strength, under the Cave. The soul prepares for the ascension in the image of a Flying Crane,<sup>452</sup> governed by Jupiter. A flying crane carries “a caduceus in its beak and allowing to drop from his feet a quiver, from which the arrows issuing forth fall downwards.”<sup>453</sup> This image will stand for a “watchful soul, which, already tired of the world and its deceits, flies toward the heavens in order to have peace and tranquillity. And from its feet falls the quiver with the arrows, which stand for the cares of this world.”<sup>454</sup> The soul leaves its earthly connections and at the last step, under Saturn, it detaches and goes up to where it came from. The ascension is reinforced with the images of Hercules and Antaeus, a young girl and on the level of Pasiphae with the death by a kiss. The image of the young girl who is ascending through Capricorn is reinforcing and supplementing the symbol of Hercules, “in order to be a stable thing”.<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 309.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>452</sup> More about the origin of the Flying Crane symbol see in Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’Idea del Teatro*, 24-26.

<sup>453</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 311.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid., 315.



The image of The Virgin drinking from the cup of Bacchus, denotes a soul forgetting her supercelestial knowledge while descending. This image and the image of a Girl descending through Crab, both placed upon the column of the Moon, one under Gorgons and the other under Pasiphae, are mirroring with the images placed on the column of Saturn, also under Gorgons and Pasiphae. The two images under Gorgons of Saturn are connected, spirit-soul-body: Hercules lifting Antaeus and the Girl ascending through Capricorn. And under the Pasiphae Endymion perpetually sleeping.

Regarding the images under the Moon, it is clear which precedes the other, first the soul goes through the oblivion process and then she incarnates. Regarding the ascension, it was not clear which of the images precedes the other and how they correlate. It might have motivated Camillo to put one more image under the Gorgons of Saturn, namely the Girl ascending. That should have made things clear that this image is after the image of Endymion, where death occurs, the worldly body dies. And then the soul transforms into the spirit and it ascends. The symbol of this image is famously called “*mors osculi*”, “death by a kiss”. Camillo justified his choice by the authority of Kabbalists, the Song of Songs, the New Testament, and Petrarch. He, furthermore, used the same quotation from the Canticles found also in Pico’s *Commento*,<sup>456</sup> “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth”.<sup>457</sup> Pico, according to Allen, believed in at least two types of deaths, of which the second one meant the detachment of the soul from the body, and the soul’s complete union with the “heavenly Venus ‘in an intimate embrace’ that is perfected in the union of the kiss, the two becoming ‘a single soul’”.<sup>458</sup> This will be the “death from kissing”, a death which occurs “when the soul in intellectual rapture unites so completely

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<sup>456</sup> The influence of Pico regarding this image and also the reference to Valeriano’s *Hieroglyphica*, see Wenneker, *An Examination*, 44-45.

<sup>457</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 331; Michael J. B. Allen “The Birth Day of Venus: Pico as Platonic Exegete in the *Commento* and the *Heptaplus*,” in Pico della Mirandola, *New Essays*, ed. Michael V. Dougherty (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), 90.

<sup>458</sup> Allen, “The Birth Day of Venus,” 90.

with incorporeal things that it rises above the body and leaves it altogether.”<sup>459</sup> Camillo claimed that one may experience many types of deaths,<sup>460</sup> and it is not quite clear how would that happen, nor what are the conditions or criteriums by which one dies from one or the other type of death. Camillo did not elaborate on the issue further.

The “*mors osculi*” is also mentioned by Agrippa as a type of death in which soul is being separated from the body, “and not the body from the soul, unless perhaps, as it happens in fury, rapture, ecstasy and sleep, and other similar vacations of the soul, which Hebrews call the death of kiss.”<sup>461</sup> Camillo described how he thought of the “*mors osculi*” in the following words:

*“Therefore, since the body is that, which holds us apart from the true union, and from the kiss which Celestial things would like to give our souls, gathering them to themselves, it follows that by the dissolution of it (the body), one might come to this kiss. The symbolic Theologians, wishing to reveal this to us, have left in their fables, that Diana (who by holding the kingdom of all the supercelestial measures, and by her passing all the superior influences, is substituted and a replacement for all superior things), they have invented, I say, that this lover Endymion, that is, of our soul, which waits there above, desirous of being able to kiss him, whereas he flees, sends him to sleep in a perpetual sleep atop a mountain. Having put him to sleep, she is able, by kissing him, to satisfy her wishes. This perpetual sleep stands for death, (...).”*<sup>462</sup>

The image is on the level of Pasiphae because it holds the symbols about the relationship between the human body and soul. “Through the kiss of divinity,” Radcliff-Umstead writes, “the soul is liberated from the prison of the body.”<sup>463</sup> The concept of the “death by a kiss”, according to Moshe Idel, came down to Pico and the subsequent (Christian) Kabbalists through rabbi Menahem Recanati (1223–1290).<sup>464</sup> Recanati, according to Idel, defined it as

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<sup>459</sup>Ibid.

<sup>460</sup>Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 331.

<sup>461</sup> “per separationem animae a corpore, non corporis ab anima, nisi per accidens, sicut contingit in furore, raptu, et extasi, et somnio, similibusque animae vacationibus, quem Hebraei vocant mortem osculi.” Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia*, 331.

Pico’s account is almost the same: “The way in which souls are sacrificed by the archangel to God, which is not explained by the Cabalists, only occurs through the separation of the soul from the body, not of the body from the soul except accidentally, as happens in the death of the kiss, (...).” Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, 525.

<sup>462</sup>Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 333.

<sup>463</sup>Radcliff-Umstead, “Giulio Camillo’s Emblems of Memory,” 54.

<sup>464</sup>Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, 116.

“cleaving“ of the soul with her “supernal soul“, her removal of the body and „cleaving“ to the Shekhinah, meaning the divine presence. Thus, the soul attaches and sticks to the highest part of the soul, detaches from the body, and then attaches to the “divine presence “, or the *anima mundi*.<sup>465</sup>

### 3.5. Fifth Level – Pasiphae

*“mankind is twofold – in the body mortal but immortal in the essential man.”*<sup>466</sup>

The fifth level deals with incarnation. The soul from level four would on this level go through the mysterious process of getting a body. The soul has the ethereal or fiery vehicle, Camillo says according to the Platonists, and if it wanted to “unite” with the “earthly vehicle”, it needs to undergo certain process due to the “purity” the soul has that prevents it from uniting “with such coarseness without a means which would hold back from the nature of one and the other, and which by descending so much from heaven to heaven and from the sphere of the element to the sphere of the element, it becomes so much coarsened, that it acquires an airy vehicle, which, holding back from the nature of both, comes to an easy union.”<sup>467</sup> Thus, in reverse, a soul when ascending, changes to the airy body in the process of cleaning, until the soul is free from the airy body and it can return “to pure fire, in which they ascend to the holy place.”<sup>468</sup> The symbol of this process and incarnation is in the myth of Pasiphae.

*“Because she was in love with the bull, she signifies the soul which according to the Platonists fall into covetousness of the body. And not being able to accomplish this union of a thing so pure and a thing so gross, she was given a simulated cow, which stands for the simulated airy body, with which she achieved sexual union, conceived, gave birth to a monster called the minotaur; (...) This image of Pasiphae, therefore, upon any door of the fifth level of the Theatre, shall include all these images, to which there shall be secured volumes containing things and words pertaining not only to inner man, but to that which is also covered by the exterior, and subsequently to the particular parts of the body according to the nature of each planet. These*

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<sup>465</sup>Ibid., 114-115.

<sup>466</sup>Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, C.H. I.15, p. 3.

<sup>467</sup>Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 317.

<sup>468</sup>Ibid.

*particular parts and subjects according to the nature of the suitable planet shall always be under the last image, which shall be a bull alone.*<sup>469</sup>

The image of coming back to the initial union will find its place under the Pasiphae of Saturn, titled the “Endymion asleep on a mountain and kissed by Diana”. That image signifies, Camillo says according to the Kabbalists, the union with the divinity:

*“that without the death of the kiss we cannot unite ourselves in a true union with the Celestial, nor with God. That I say, since among the number of many deaths, into which also enters that which we said of Antaeus, is this of the kiss, which Solomon mentions thus in the beginning of the Canticles: “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.” (...) therefore, since the body is that, which holds us apart from a true union, and from the kiss which Celestial things would like to give our souls, gathering them to themselves, it follows that by the dissolution of it (the body), one might come to this kiss.”*<sup>470</sup>

The kiss is given by Diana, who, according to “the symbolic Theologians” Camillo says, symbolizes “all superior things” due to her “holding the kingdom of all the supercelestial measures, and by her passing all the superior influences”. And the kiss is given to Endymion who is a symbol of the human soul. Diana sends him to sleep, which signifies death, and then kisses him, which signifies divine unification.<sup>471</sup> Interestingly, the image of “Diana to whom Mercury offers a garment”, under the Pasiphae of the Moon, symbolizes the transformation of a soul or body. This image would stand as a starting point on the incarnation level, which will end up with full divinization, or unification with divinity.

The level of Pasiphae has under each planet an image of a bull, and each bull has certain human body parts, “according to the nature of each planet.”<sup>472</sup> Camillo attached these different body parts to the specific zodiac signs, according to the astrological houses for each planet. Giorgi, as well, marked the zodiac-body parts correlations, and named his source, first-century didactic poet Marcus Manilius. He quoted the verses from Manilius’ *Astronomica*, II, verses

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 317-319. The same metaphor of Pasiphae with the Bull for the soul descending into the body can be found also in the *Treatise on Imitation*, 189.

<sup>470</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 331-333.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid., 319.

453-465. Manilius' pairs to great extent correlate to Camillo's "ordinary parts". In the following table, we can see the correlations between the authors. The only difference is under Virgo. Camillo's attributes to Virgo as ordinary parts arms and hands, while for Manilius these will be attributed to Gemini together with the shoulders, while Virgo will be responsible for \*"abdomen below the ribs", translation of *ilia* according to the Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary.

	House	Body parts in the Theatre	Body parts in Manilius/ Giorgi <sup>473</sup>
<b>Moon</b>	Cancer	Extraordinary: Hair, beard, skin on the head, brain. Ordinary: Chest. <sup>474</sup>	Chest ( <i>pectus</i> )
<b>Mercury</b>	Gemini, Virgo	Extraordinary: Tongue and language, speech. Ordinary: shoulders; arms and hands. <sup>475</sup>	Hands and shoulders ( <i>brachia, umeri</i> ); *groin/flanks ( <i>ilia</i> )
<b>Venus</b>	Taurus, Libra	Extraordinary: Nose and power of smell, cheeks, lips, mouth. Ordinary: neck, throat, gullet, rump. <sup>476</sup>	Neck ( <i>colla</i> ); buttocks ( <i>clunes</i> )
<b>Sun</b>	Leo	Extraordinary: eyes and their function. Ordinary: spine, flanks. <sup>477</sup>	Flanks, back ( <i>latera, scapulae</i> )
<b>Mars</b>	Aries, Scorpio	Extraordinary: nothing. Ordinary: Head, Genitals with their functions. <sup>478</sup>	Head ( <i>caput</i> ); groin ( <i>inguen</i> )
<b>Jupiter</b>	Sagittarius, Pisces	Extraordinary: ears and their functions. Ordinary: thighs, feet. <sup>479</sup>	Tights ( <i>femora</i> ); feet ( <i>pedes</i> )
<b>Saturn</b>	Capricorn, Aquarius <sup>480</sup>	Extraordinary: hair, wrinkles. Ordinary: knees, legs. <sup>481</sup>	Both knees ( <i>utraqe genua</i> ); legs ( <i>crura</i> ).

Table 3. Astrological connections with the body parts in the Theatre compared to Giorgi's scheme.

<sup>473</sup>Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, I.6.17, 111r-v.

<sup>474</sup>Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 321.

<sup>475</sup>Ibid., 323.

<sup>476</sup>Ibid., 325.

<sup>477</sup>Ibid., 325.

<sup>478</sup>Ibid., 327.

<sup>479</sup>Ibid., 331.

<sup>480</sup>The verse about Aquarius and correlating body part was omitted by Giorgi, but it can be found in Manilius' *Astronomica* accessible via Archive.org: <https://ia800503.us.archive.org/8/items/mmaniliastrono00breigoog/mmaniliastrono00breigoog.pdf>.

<sup>481</sup>Ibid., 333.

Surprisingly, Giorgi's account of Zodiac signs-planets pairs differs from Camillo's account significantly.<sup>482</sup> Since Porphyry in *On the Cave of the Nymphs* had grouped the same zodiac house-planet pairs, it might be that Camillo was influenced by that source.<sup>483</sup> On the other hand, Agrippa has almost the same zodiac house-planet pairs as well.<sup>484</sup> Agrippa made an account of the body parts related to the zodiac signs, where he made a difference between body parts that are under the rulership of a certain planet, and when a zodiac sign "takes care of their members". The latter group is to a greater degree similar to Camillo's distribution of ordinary parts.<sup>485</sup>

However, the "extraordinary body parts" with their zodiac correlatives are still to be investigated. A thorough investigation of what were the reasons, implications, and knowledge behind pairing specific body parts with the zodiac signs surpasses the limits of the current thesis.

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<sup>482</sup>See: Ibid, I.6.19, 114r.

<sup>483</sup> Lamberton, *Porphyry*, 33.

<sup>484</sup> Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, II.XXXVIII-XLIV, 361-389. For differences with Venus and Jupiter in these chapters, see *ibid.*, I.XXXI, 97.

<sup>485</sup> Cf. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, I.XXII, 72-73.

### 3.6. Sixth Level – The Winged Sandals of Mercury

“ὥσεὶ πτερὸν ἢ νόημα”<sup>486</sup>

[„Swift as a bird or thought.”]

The sixth level deals with “all of the operations”, Camillo specifies, “which man can perform naturally and without art.”<sup>487</sup> The symbol of Mercury<sup>488</sup> with all his mythological accessories which he “puts on when he goes to execute the will of gods, as the poets tell us.”<sup>489</sup> Camillo very briefly elaborated this level, making an impression that he had passed the mysterious and obscure parts of the creation. He passed all the steps in the creation, especially of the soul, preceding the realization. The development of this huge device has come to the level of the inferior world where humans do things naturally or suffer the occurrence of things. On this level, we shall find symbols for natural actions such as moving, eating, changing, etc. Many of the images were repeated from the previous levels. In fact, only one image throughout the whole level of the Winged Sandals was not repeated elsewhere, the Golden Chain under the government of the Sun. The concept of which I have discussed above. I find it very curious for what reason this important image was not elaborated further, but rather mentioned briefly in one sentence. Since the image of the Golden Chain is unique, in its meaning and presentation, and positioned upon the central column, perhaps Camillo intended to emphasize the endpoint of the binding of the soul with God.

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<sup>486</sup> Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, trans. Percival Vaughan Davies, *Saturnalia* (New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1969), 1,19,9; quoted from *Odyssey* 7, 36.

<sup>487</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 335.

<sup>488</sup> Cf., “(...) let us fly on winged feet like earthly Mercuries into the embrace of our most blessed mother and enjoy the longed-for peace: the most holy peace, the indivisible bond, the friendship which is one soul, the friendship whereby all minds do not merely accord in one intellect that is above every intellect but in some impressible fashion become absolutely one. This is that friendship which the Pythagoreans say is the end of all philosophy. This is that peace which God makes on his heights and which the angels descending to earth announced to men of good will, that by this peace the men themselves ascending into heaven might become angles.” Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 11-12.

<sup>489</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 335.

It seems somewhat puzzling to find Mercury as a symbol for actions that do not require skills. Mercury is usually thought of as a very skillful, and skill-promoting deity.<sup>490</sup> Did Camillo imagine Mercury as the cause of unskillful or natural actions in human beings, rather than a representative of these? On the other hand, not all the proposed actions seem unskillful, but rather that the skill was naturally acquired from the beginning of humanity, such as the skill to deliver children or to take water. Unskillful actions are actions such as hiding, laughing, making noise, or helping. As written in the Orphic Hymn dedicated to Mercury/Hermes, he is a god to whom one prays for help in “necessities to mortal kind.” The midwifery<sup>491</sup> and related “actions” are placed behind the image of a “Young Girl descending through Cancer” under the influence of the Moon. The same image is placed on the Pasiphae level and represents the incarnation of the soul descending through the Cancer, as discussed above. This image on the sixth level seems to serve as an enforcement of the incarnation concept, together with the view of the same event from the other perspective. Perhaps it serves as now, after the general incarnation part of the creation at the level of Pasiphae, coming into the reality of this life as a baby through childbirth.

Proclus in his commentary on the *Alcibiades I* gave an interesting interpretation of Mercury’s participation in human affairs, incorporated in the theme of learning and attaining knowledge. There are, he said according to Plato, two ways of gaining knowledge, through learning and discovery, “as being appropriate to our souls.” Acquisition of knowledge is in fact the recollection of the soul. The soul has the knowledge in itself but has forgotten it during the descension to this world. Mercury is the one who gives the gifts of learning and discovery.

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<sup>490</sup> See the Orphic Hymn to Mercury: “ruler of mankind”, “prudent mind”, “celestial messenger of various skills”, “powerful arts”, “friend of man and prophet of discourse: great life-supporter”, skilled in “arts gymnastic” and in “fraud divine”; Mercury has power over “all languages to explain”, he is “the source of gain”, “corucian, blessed, profitable God. Of various speech, whose aid in works we find, and in necessities to mortal kind. Dire weapon of the tongue, which men revere, ...()”. The hymn ends with the praying words “Give graceful speech, and memory’s increase.” *The hymns of Orpheus*, in: Taylor, *Thomas Taylor the Platonist: Selected Writings*, 240.

<sup>491</sup> “Maia, mother of Hermes by Zues and daughter of Atlas, is considered as “foster-mother”, “midwife”, and “nurse”. William O’Neill, Proclus: *Alcibiades I, a Translation and Commentary* (The Netherlands: Springer-Science+Business Media, 1971), fn. 359., 125.



*“But the soul of man, which possesses innate in itself every notion, and has preconceived all knowledge, but is prevented by birth from the contemplation of what it possesses, requires both learning and discovery, in order that through learning it may stimulate its intellectual perceptions of itself, and through discovery may find itself and the fullness of the notions innate therein. These are the gifts of gods who benefit it in its fallen state and recall it to the life of the intellect, both coming from the order of Hermes, but one in so far as this god is son of Maia, daughter of Alas, the other in so far as he is messenger of Zeus. By revealing “the Will of the Father”, he bestows learning upon souls; but in so far as he proceeds from Maia, with whom inquiry lies hid, he bestows discovery upon his fosterlings.”<sup>492</sup>*

The elaboration goes further to even more interesting statements, which lead closer to what Camillo might have had in mind when choosing Mercury’s accessories for the sixth, “natural actions”, level. There are, Proclus said, two sides of the soul’s knowledge, 1) inarticulate, which is possessed by one’s “essential being” as “the innate notions of things”; and 2) articulate knowledge, “scientific and indubitable.” Souls have the knowledge imprinted in them by their existence, “we have apprehended it from eternity”, but what it should be done by the soul is the “acquisition of knowledge by the realization and articulation of innate notions.” Knowledge needs to be actualized by realization, which is done through learning and education. Thus, there are two steps within the full recollection, and the first one is self-awareness. “When we recollect something, we do not at the same time recall when we learned it, but there is necessarily some definite time of recollection.”<sup>493</sup>

Hermes/Mercury “presides overall education, he is naturally our guide, leading the way for us to the intelligible, leading the soul up from this mortal place, directing the various companies of souls, dispersing their slumber and oblivion and acting as a bestower of recollection, the purpose of which is the pure intellection of what is divine.”<sup>494</sup>

In the Italian version of *The Idea of the Theatre*, the sixth level is titled the TALARI. In classical Latin, the word had been used only two times to denote the winged sandals of Mercury.

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid., <187, 188>, 124-125.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., <191,192>, 127.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., <195>, 130.

Once by Virgil (*Aeneid*, 4.239) and once by Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, 2,736).<sup>495</sup> On the first occasion, Mercury was sent to Aeneas by the omnipotent Jupiter, to remind him of his predestined journey. Aeneas was to be told to leave Carthage and go to Italian land to found a city there. Macrobius in the *Saturnalia* (5,6,11-12) presented the Virgilian description of Mercury on this occasion, with his attributes, and the Homeric (*Iliad* 24, 339-345)<sup>496</sup> description of Hermes sent to Priam. The parallel reading of the two accounts demonstrates Virgil's imitation skills:

*"So said he. And the other made ready to obey the command of his mighty father. And first he binds on his feet the golden sandals which bear him soaring on wing high over sea and land, swift as the rushing wind. Then he takes his wand; with this he summons forth pale spirits from Orcus, others he conducts below to gloomy Tartarus, and with it he brings and banishes sleep and unseals the eyes at death. On his wand relying, he derives the winds and leaves the massed clouds."* (Virgil, *A.* 4, 238-244)

*"So he said; nor did the Messenger, the Slayer of Argus, disobey. Forthwith then he bound under his feet the fair sandals, immortal and of gold, which would bear him over the waters and over the boundless earth, swift as the breath of the wind. And he took his wand, wherewith he soothes the eyes of men, of whom he will, and others again he wakens out of sleep. This wand did the mighty Slayer of Argus take in his hands and fly."*<sup>497</sup> (Homer, *Il.* 24. 339-345)

With his golden sandals and the wand, Mercury/Hermes is in both accounts sent down to humans to warn, guide and instruct them about divine wishes and ideas. A difference between the two descriptions of the sandals (*talaria*, *πέδιλα*) is Virgil's omission of Homer's epithets: beautiful (*καλὰ*) and immortal, divine (*ἀμβρόσια*). Both accounts give Hermes/Mercury the ability to give and send away dreams or sleep with his caduceus, the wand.<sup>498</sup> Yet, Virgil's

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<sup>495</sup> Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*.

<sup>496</sup> The same passage can be also read in *Odyssey* 5, 43-49.

<sup>497</sup> Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 305.

<sup>498</sup> The image of Mercury's Caduceus in the Theatre finds its place under the government of Jupiter, upon the doors of the Cave, Pasiphae, Winged Sandals and Prometheus. Camillo describes it as the "rod (*la verga*) of Mercury, which he placed as the myths say, between the two snakes that he found fighting, (...) and they encircled themselves around it in a perpetual union." Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 271. Macrobius also said that "the Egyptians also maintain that the attributes of the caduceus illustrate the generation, or "genesis" as it is called, of mankind; for they say that four deities are present to preside over a man's birth: his Genius, Fortune, Love and Necessity." Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1, 19, 17, p. 136.

Mercury can additionally “unseal the eyes at death,”<sup>499</sup> and has the power over life and death. With his wand, Virgil’s Mercury can invite the pale souls (*hac animas evocat (...) pallentes*) from the Orcus, the underworld, and can send (*mittit*) the souls to the Tartarus, likewise the abode of the dead. Thus, Mercury was also bearing the title “ductor/deductor animarum”, “ψυχαγωγός”, or ψυχοπομπός. Did Camillo have in mind these Mercurian abilities? It is, certainly, interesting that Mercury not only guides the souls down to the underworld but also has the power to bring them back to this world. Or, perhaps, the idea was that Mercury with his magic wand seals the eyes of the soul before human birth and unseals the eyes of a child born into this world, almost at the same time.

### 3.7. Seventh Level – Prometheus

*“The heavens appeared in seven circles, the gods became visible in the shapes of the stars and all their constellations, and the arrangement of (this lighter substance) corresponded to the gods contained in it. (...) Through his own power, each god sent forth what was assigned to him. (...) And through the wonder-working course of the cycling gods they created every soul incarnate to contemplate heaven, the course of heavenly gods, the works of god and the working of nature; to examine things that are good; to know divine power; to know the whirling changes of fair and foul; and to discover every means of working skillfully with things that are good. For them this is the beginning of the virtuous life and of wise thinking as far as the course of cycling gods destines it, and it is also the beginning of their release to what will remain of them after they have left great monuments on earth in works of industry.”<sup>500</sup>*

This level deals with all the arts invented by humankind. Camillo paraphrased the well-known myth about Prometheus<sup>501</sup> and Epimetheus who were in charge of giving appropriate attributes to all the animals and beasts. Epimetheus asked Prometheus to let him do the

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<sup>499</sup> The part of the verse “lumina morte resignat” was widely commented, due to various possible interpretations. Resignat=revocat; resignat=liberat; resignat=claudit. See in: Arthur Stanley Pease, *Publi Vergili Maroni Liber Quartus* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953):

<https://ia800201.us.archive.org/21/items/Aeneid4COMMENTARYPease1935/Aeneid%204%20COMMENTARY%20%5BPease%201935%5D%5Bdouble%20paged%5D.pdf>

<sup>500</sup> Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, C.H. III, 3-4, p. 13-14.

<sup>501</sup> Prometheus, Pico says in *On the Dignity of Man*, was in “the secret rites” a symbol of man, “by the reason of our nature sloughing its skin and transforming itself; hence metamorphoses were popular among the Jews and the Pythagoreans.” Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 5.

distribution. And after giving all the attributes to all the animals, Epimetheus found himself with no attributes or gifts for humankind. Prometheus, noticing this unfortunate event, decided to steal the fire, “the knowledge of skill in the arts from Vulcan and Minerva,”<sup>502</sup> and give it to humankind as a means for survival. Camillo equalizes this fire with the “insight” without which one could not “achieve it nor use it.”<sup>503</sup> The argument is based on the claim that this fire is in fact the divine ray, which provides the access to higher knowledge, and enables human beings to do, make and produce all the things below:

*“By that theft, therefore, man alone among all animals acquainted with the divine force, had knowledge of the gods from the beginning, by which knowledge he became religious and dedicated to them altars and statues. With his skill he articulately divided speech into words, built houses, made clothing, beds and gathered sustenance from the earth.”*<sup>504</sup>

Camillo ends the introduction to this level by pointing out that even though the political and martial powers were not distributed by Prometheus, he would put them under this level “in order not to raise the Theatre to a higher level.”<sup>505</sup> In the *Treatise on Imitation*, Camillo said that without the seventh level, all the previous levels would be in vain.<sup>506</sup> The seventh level will, finally, open the way to perfect realization:

*“My seventh and final level, which enables us to access finally everything for which it is possible to hope and thanks to which, when we reach it, we can say we have truly made a copy, is the act of judgement which permits us to choose. We must already have scoured the other six levels; considering for whom we are writing, in what discipline, and what is being written. It is because of the judgement of the one we wish to imitate that we will know how to choose from among the matter; (...)”*<sup>507</sup>

The story of Prometheus was, according to Allen, used and transformed by Ficino into „a creation-resurrection myth keyed to the return of the intellect, along with all the other

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<sup>502</sup>Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 343.

<sup>503</sup>Ibid.

<sup>504</sup>Ibid.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>506</sup> Camillo, *Treatise on Imitation*, 201.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., 203.

faculties together, to their original condition as powers suffused with celestial light.” Prometheus, concluded Allen, who, in Ficino’s thought, stands for the inner “jovial fire”, that turns towards and finds its way to return to its source. Prometheus symbolized „the end of a temporal, perhaps even an astrological cycle, and a “return” to a time when he can regain his status as the most perfect of all the pre-Olympian gods. For at that moment of conversion to his final cause, Prometheus’ whole being will be flooded with the light of celestial understanding which is properly his.”<sup>508</sup> Ficinian symbolic behind Prometheus might bring us closer to Camillo’s objectives: our journey comes to an end and with complete immersion, the human soul has a chance to transform into her perfect primordial state.

Many of the images under the seventh level are exclusive and introducing skills, arts and sciences invented and developed by humans. One of the images that I would like to point out is Sibyl with a tripod under the column of the Sun. Sibyl<sup>509</sup> in the Theatre stands for, naturally, divination and prophecy. It seems reasonable to conclude that it is the same Sybil who warned Aeneas that the way down to the underworld is easy, but hard to go back to this world from, and who eventually gave him the answer on how to do it:

*“But if such love is in thy heart – if such a yearning, twice to swim the Stygian lake, twice to see black Tartarus – and if though art pleased to give the rein to the mad endeavour, hear what must first be done. There lurks in a shady tree a bough, golden in leaf and pliant stem, held consecrate to nether Juno; this all the grove hides, and shadows veil in the dim valleys. But ‘tis not given to pass beneath earth’s hidden places, save to him who hath plucked from the tree the golden-tressed fruitage. This hath beautiful Proserpine ordained to be borne to her as her own gift. When the first is torn away, a second fails not, golden too, and the spray bears leaf of the selfsame ore. Search then with eyes aloft and, when found, duly pluck it with thy hand; for of*

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<sup>508</sup> Allen, “Transfiguration and the Fire within”, 62.

<sup>509</sup> Sibyl is mentioned under the Cave of Venus, when Camillo describes the image of Cerberus, as a symbol for “three natural necessities, which are eating, drinking, and sleeping. Since these much hinder man from his meditation, Vergil imagines that Aeneas, by advice of Sibyl, wishing to pass to the contemplation of lofty things, throws him a moutful and immediately passes.” Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 255, *Aeneid* VI.421-423. Bolzoni found the reference in *De l’humana deificatione* as well, and described it as abstinence, which corresponds to the second step in deification. Bolzoni and Camillo, *L’Idea del Teatro*, fn.1, 182.

*itself will it follow thee, freely and with ease; if Fate be calling thee; else with no force wilt thou avail to win it or rend it with hard steel.*"<sup>510</sup>

Sibyl was also mentioned in Camillo's *Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio*, in the context of "*transire*" (to pass through). Camillo equalized "*transito*" with "*conversione*". Sibyl vaticinates inspired by the divine frenzy, or the Spirit of God. But when the Spirit of God leaves her, she becomes ignorant. The Spirit of God did not "rest" in her, explains Camillo, but it was "passing through."<sup>511</sup>

Camillo, when introducing the image of the Golden Bough upon the first level, under the Sun, confirmed that he refers to Virgil's the Golden Bough,<sup>512</sup> which stands for the key to the underworld:

*"This shall be a tree with a golden bough, which is that about which Vergil writes, that without it one cannot go to see the kingdom of Hades. And this image in this place shall stand for the intelligible things, and those which cannot fall under the senses, but we can only imagine and understand them enlightened by the Active Intellect. This same image under the Gorgons shall symbolize the Active Intellect."*<sup>513</sup>

After an initiate to the Theatre has gone in all directions from the bottom to the top, from left to right and right to left, now seeing the Sibyl sitting upon the top level of Prometheus, under the government of the centrally positioned Sun, can go back down to be given the Golden

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<sup>510</sup> Rushton, Fairclough, H., *Virgil with an English translation by H- Rushton Fairclough, in Two Volumes, I: Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), A. VI.133-148, 517.

<sup>511</sup> (...) Virgilio finge, che e la Sibilla, e Heleno danno risponso ad Enea non legati, ma sciolti; e non dimeno fa, che e Sileno, e Proteo non haurebbono risponso, senon legati, ilqual legamento risponde in alcuno modo a quelli verbi Manere e Quiescere; e il non esser legato fa col verbo Transire; perche lo spirito di Dio non riposava nella Sibilla; anzi subito, che essa piena di divin furore hauea vaticinato, il furor divino partiva da lei; e essa ritornava ignorante: e cosi mostrò, che lo spirito di Dio faceva transito: Ma ancor questo passo, quando farà Dio, ch'io le sia presente, manifesterò nella maniera, ch'io l'intendo, e parimente il legamento. Ho parlato per fino a qui della conversione assai abundantemente, e perche ella sia chiamata transito, e di sopra ancor come Dio la fa, e come possiamo devenir santi, mentre noi le consentiamo. Resta che dimostriamo in quante maniere Dio faccia la conversione predetta, e per quai mezi possiamo noi consentiré. Dio rivolge talhor in questo mondo la persona, senza lasciarla mai accompagnare allá parte animale (...)." Camillo, *Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio*, 46-47.

<sup>512</sup> The Golden Bough together with the Golden Chain was mentioned in *Lettera del rivolgimento dell'huomo a Dio*, bearing the meaning of free-will, "il nostro libero arbitrio se dee trovar disposto al ratto che Dio fa di noi." Bolzoni and Camillo, *L'Idea del Theatro*, fn. 6, 211. Camillo, *Tutte l'Opere* (1554), 54.

<sup>513</sup> Camillo, *The Idea of the Theatre*, 215.

Bough (*ramus aureus*), a key to the abode of the souls, positioned in the centre of the whole Theatre. Upon the doors of the Gorgons under the Sun, a spectator is invited to take into his hands this key to the initiation and start their recollection journey to the supercelestial realms, in order to attain the power given or offered to humankind through their superior part of the soul, which participates in the divine mind.

Finally, a person is equipped with all the necessary tools to recall the eternal stages of creation and use the rediscovered knowledge to fulfil their whole potential of the articulate realization in this world, whether in different sciences and arts, religion, eloquence, etc. All these would or should reach their perfect realizations by understanding the individual soul's specific attributes and characteristics, in which the soul was vested through her journey from the beginning of creation.

## Conclusion

This thesis aims to position Giulio Camillo in the middle of Renaissance efforts to find more profound understanding of the world by implementation of ancient traditions. I primarily examined Camillo's main work *The Idea of the Theatre*, and partially explored several of his other works. Through the analysis I concluded that both, the encyclopedic categorisation of universal knowledge and the Theatre as a rhetorical device, are in service to a deeper esoteric purpose of the Theatre. Camillo relied on and contributed to the development of Christian Kabbalism, enriching it with the Neoplatonic and Hermetic sources. The main points are that Camillo reinterpreted the concept of the immortality of the soul, the relations between microcosm and macrocosm, and he reinforced the position of a human being as a great wonder. The thesis proposes that the main purpose of the Theatre is the deification through the transmutation of the soul, by means of the Art of Recalling.

I compared Camillo's ideas with several Camillo's philosophical models, such as Pico della Mirandola, Francesco Giorgi, and Egidio of Viterbo and their points about the creation of the world, creation and the nature of the soul and its ascension. This was done as an attempt to understand Camillo's syncretism and innovation. Furthermore, it is demonstrated in the current thesis that Camillo's method was that the soul ascends through recalling its descension. This preposition explains the reversal in the form of the Theatre, as the lowest things, or the last in the creation, are positioned on the highest level of the construction. I indicated that, when using the concept of celestial influences for ordering the images, appropriate to each planet, Camillo imagined the steps in soul's creation and the path of soul's remembering about its descending through the planetary spheres. The thesis has shown that Camillo's expansion of the Neoplatonic idea of celestial influences by Kabbalistic notion of Sefirot and Christian angelology, is in great degree concordant with Giorgi's and Agrippa's schemes. Furthermore, I pointed out Camillo's specific reinterpretation of the concept of Chain of Being. Camillo



positioned the symbol of the golden chain centrally upon the Sun, and with the notion of free-will he signified that human being is not constrained by celestial influences. Around Camillo various heated academic and religious discussions were taking place about the immortality and nature of the soul. Through my comparative research, it became clearer that Camillo took a similar position as Giorgi, incorporating the notion of free will by which the soul can decide whether it would become immortal or not.

I examined Camillo's literary models for composing several images in the Theatre, such as Porphyry, Proclus, and Macrobius. These sources were purposefully used, as archetypes, for Camillo's main idea, the transmutation of the soul. Camillo, to my understanding, developed an innovative concept, starting from the Hermetic concept of the correspondences between the microcosm and macrocosm. Camillo's innovation was based on the threefold division of the world, as Pico and Agrippa, and the threefold division of the soul, as Giorgi. Since both, the world and the soul, are divided into three parts, their creation in the Theatre are presented as parallel. The ability of the soul to attain, or rather to recall the universal knowledge is, therefore, due to parallelism in the creation of the world and the soul. I propose that the parallelism in the creation of the world and human soul serves as a bridge for reaching the universal knowledge.

I believe that Camillo's Theatre should be fully inspected as esoteric device for transmutation. This would mean that the rhetoric as well and encyclopedic aspects of the Theatre should be analysed and deduced from the point of view in which the main purpose is the initiation, re-discovering of the universal language and of universal primordial knowledge. My suggestion is that Camillo applied the rhetorical skills in his usage of archetypal images. Through the usage of rhetorical figures, it seems, Camillo aimed to provide an initiate with the key to universal language. The relation between Camillo's images and rhetorical figures, employed in the Theatre as *clavis universalis*, deserves detailed future analysis. Additionally, a

detailed research should be done on Camillo's specific organic organization and categorization. Corrado Bologna's book, *El teatro de la mente: De Giulio Camillo a Aby Warburg* (2017), might have brought deeper insights about this question.

The current thesis, hopefully, contributes to the scholarly research of Camillo by clearly showing Camillo's emphasis on the soul's journey and its transmutation. Camillo's scientific approach, that includes the necessity of the presence of human soul, proves itself to be based on organically organized universe. Through soul's recalling of that organic universal organization, Camillo's Theatre becomes a sophisticated esoteric device to regain universal knowledge.

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