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Finding Felicity through the "Pythagorean Eye": Pythagoreanism in the Work of Thomas Traherne

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Since Bertram Dobell's rediscovery of Thomas Traherne's work at the turn of the twentieth century, scholars have attempted to explicate Traherne's work, philosophy, and theology through analyses of his probable sources. Although Louis Martz, James Balakier, John Wallace, and Carol Marks have examined various secondary sources of Traherne's philosophy and Christian mysticism,¹ nearly all critics, including Gladys Wade, who states that the "chief" strand of philosophical thought in Traherne's work is Platonism, have accepted Traherne's Platonism as a primary feature in his writings.² Traherne's indebtedness to Platonism may be obvious; however, Traherne stresses those elements of Platonism that were often connected to Renaissance lore concerning Pythagoras and his followers, and scholars have not considered the importance of Renaissance Pythagoreanism in

¹ Louis Martz in *The Paradise Within: Studies in Vaughan, Traherne, and Milton* (New Haven: Yale U Pr, 1964) deals with the Augustinian-Bonaventuran tradition in Traherne; James Balakier's "Thomas Traherne's Dobell Series and the Baconian Model of Experience," *English Studies* 70 (1989): 233-47 discusses Bacon's possible influence on Traherne; John Wallace discusses the Ignatian meditative tradition in Traherne's work in "Thomas Traherne and the Structure of Meditation," *English Literary History* 25 (1958): 78-89; and Carol Marks discusses the philosophy of Hermes Trismegistus in "Thomas Traherne and Hermes Trismegistus," *Renaissance News* 19 (1966): 118-31.

² Gladys Wade, *Thomas Traherne* (Princeton: Princeton U Pr, 1944), 215. Other important studies concerned with aspects of Traherne's Platonism and mysticism include Itat-Husain's *The Mystical Element in the Metaphysical Poets of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1966); A. L. Clement's *The Mystical Poetry of Thomas Traherne* (Cambridge: Harvard U Pr, 1969); Gerard Cox III's "Traherne's Centuries: A Platonic Devotion of 'Divine Philosophy,'" *Modern Philology* 69 (1971): 10-24; Richard Douglas Jordan's *The Temple of Eternity* (Port Washington, N.Y. and London: Kennikat Pr, 1972); Malcom Day's "Traherne and the Doctrine of Pre-existence," *Studies in Philology* 65 (1968): 81-97; Carol L. Marks' "Thomas Traherne and Cambridge Platonism," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 81 (1966): 521-34; and John E. Trimpey's "An Analysis of Traherne's 'Thoughts I,'" *Studies in Philology* 68 (1971): 88-104.

Traherne's mysticism and world view. Nevertheless, in addition to Traherne's regarding Pythagoras as a "great Example among the Heathens, [whom] I here represent as a Myrror for Christians"³ (a declaration that suggests that Traherne's conception of Pythagoreanism somehow complements his own understanding of Christian spirituality), Traherne's important image of the "infant-ey" closely resembles the "Pythagorean eye" discussed by Ficino as well as Pythagoras' "eyes of the soul" described by Ovid. More substantial, however, are the similarities in what these "eyes" are supposed to see. An examination of Traherne's knowledge of Pythagorean doctrines—through those Renaissance writers whom Traherne studied—reveals that Traherne's conception of Pythagoreanism and its emphasis on the harmony and order of creation was a significant influence on Traherne's understanding of man's relationship to the natural world and to God, and it is an understanding acquired through the adult's reacquisition of an essentially "Pythagorean" third eye.

One of Traherne's primary purposes in the *Centuries of Meditations* and *Poems* is to demonstrate that through an understanding of the beauty, order, and harmony of God's creations, man can develop his soul and reach a state of "felicity,"⁴ and such felicity can only be attained if the individual begins to see the world with an "infant-ey." As Harold G. Ridlon explains, the infant-eye is for Traherne "capable of seeing things as God sees them."⁵ Although Traherne associates the infant-eye with a return to a childlike state, he believes that a child's knowledge, while magnificent, is only intuitive. Traherne writes that as a child "My Knowledg was Divine: I knew by Intuition those things which since my Apostasie, I Collected again,

³ See Traherne's *Commonplace Book*, folio 80, Column I (Bodl. Ms. Engl. Poet c.42).

⁴ The concept of man's "felicity" is important in Traherne's philosophy. "Felicity" is the title of one poem, and Traherne makes reference to felicity thirty-three times throughout his other poems and many more times in his prose. For discussions of this, see T. O. Beachcroft's "Traherne and the Doctrine of Felicity," *Criterion* 9 (1930): 291-307; R. G. Howarth's "Felicity in Traherne," *Notes and Queries* 193 (1948): 249-50; Francis King's "Intellect and Felicity," *Restoration Literature*, ed. Harold Love (London: Methuen, 1972): 121-43; M. V. Seetaraman's "The Way of Felicity in Thomas Traherne's 'Centuries' and 'Poems,'" *Critical Essays on English Literature*, ed. V. S. Seturaman (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1965): 81-104.

⁵ Harold G. Ridlon, "The Function of the 'Infant-Ey' in Traherne's Poetry," *Studies in Philology* 61 (1964): 627-39, 627. Ridlon primarily associates the concept of the "infant-ey" with the Platonic preexistence of the soul and the connection this preexistence has with the purity of childhood; however, the preexistence (or transmigration) of the soul was first a Pythagorean concept, later adopted by Plato.

by the Highest Reason."⁶ Traherne praises the natural innocence of children and their natural insight into the divine, but his emphasis is on the adult who regains the infant-eye and thus brings to that eye the power and gift of reason, knowledge, and the understanding of how such beauty is part of a much more complex divine harmony.

In their edition of Traherne's *Christian Ethicks*, Carol Marks and George Guffey note Hermes Trismegistus, who contrasted sensual and spiritual light, as a possible source for Traherne's infant-eye.⁷ However, Traherne's concept is much more like "the divine eye" of Pythagoras. A common Pythagorean source for the Renaissance was Book XV of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Pythagoras is a character.⁸ Although any student at Oxford would have read Ovid, with Traherne no speculation is needed, for he quotes from the *Metamorphoses* in *Christian Ethicks*.⁹ In Ovid's narrative, Pythagoras offers Numa Pompilius a long speech concerning "quae sit rerum natura" [what is the nature of things]¹⁰ and Ovid states "mente deos adiit et, quae natura negabat / visibus humanis, oculis ea pectoris hausit" (15.63-64) [by means of the mind, he (Pythagoras) approached the gods, and what knowledge nature denied to human sight, he consumed with the eyes of the soul]. Being able to approach the gods [deos adiit], Ovid's Pythagoras demonstrates the very essence of Traherne's infant eye.

Traherne refers to this eye and to the ability to see divine things in much of his writing, but in "Sight" he gives the reader the most complete explanation of what the nature of this divine vision is. He states:

Three Eys adorn'd my Face:
Two Luminaries in my Flesh
Did me refresh:

⁶ Thomas Traherne, *Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings*, ed. H. M. Margoliouth (Oxford: Clarendon Pr., 1958), 3.2. Unless otherwise noted, this and all subsequent quotes from the *Centuries* will be cited in the text by century and meditation number.

⁷ Thomas Traherne, *Christian Ethicks*, eds. Carol Marks and George Guffey, (Ithaca: Cornell U Pr., 1968), n64:3, 329.

⁸ Heninger believes that "the classical author who transmitted Pythagorean ideas to the largest number of readers . . . is probably Ovid" (*Touches*, 50); E. M. W. Tillyard seems to agree as he states, concerning the notion of the elements and the importance of balance of the elements in man, "Of all versions of these notions that pronounced by Pythagoras in his speech in the last book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was the most famous in Elizabethan days" in *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956), 58.

⁹ Eds. Marks and Guffey (above, note 7), 49.

¹⁰ Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), 15.6. All subsequent quotes will be from this edition and will be cited in the text by book number and line number.

But one did lurk within,
Beneath my skin.
That was of greater worth than both the other.¹¹

He claims "Those Eys of Sense" (13) are drawn to "nat'ral things" (15) and these sensual eyes "Of narrow Bound / To know but earthly Springs" (17-18). However, the internal eye, the eye "which throu the Hevens went" was "spirit'all" (19 and 22). Here, Traherne uses the metaphor of sight to illustrate the schism between sensual knowledge and knowledge of God: "A visiv Ey things visible doth see; / But with th' Invisible, Invisibles agree" (23-24). As with Ovid's Pythagoras, Traherne claims an ability to see what the "Eys of Sense" cannot.

Traherne's concept of "Three eyes" adorning his face, two of which were in his flesh and one that "did lurk within," bears a striking resemblance to a passage in Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Philebus*. Ficino says of Plato:

Inter prudentissimos Graecorum natum est proverbium Platonem habuisse tres oculos: unum quo humana, alium quo naturalia, alium quo divina suspiceret qui in fronte esset cum alii sub fronte.¹²

[Among the wise men of Greece arose the saying that Plato had three eyes: one with which he looked at human things, another at natural things, another at divine things (which was in his forehead, while the others were under his forehead)].

Michael J. B. Allen in an article unrelated to Traherne, entitled "Marsilio Ficino on Plato's Pythagorean Eye," examines this passage in Ficino.¹³ Interestingly, the three eyes discussed by Ficino do not derive from Plato himself. Ficino retells a "myth" of Plato's "tres oculos," and in his commentary on *Philebus* Ficino addresses the origins of Plato's three eyes. In discussing the nature of Plato's "tres oculos," Ficino explores the sources of Plato's philosophy. Allen shows that Ficino actually considers Plato's philosophy not as anything altogether original but rather a blending of Pythagorean and Socratic ideas:

¹¹ Traherne (above, note 6), 6-11. This and all subsequent quotes from the poems will be from the Margoliouth edition, cited in the text by line number.

¹² Ed. and trans. Michael J. B. Allen. *Marsilio Ficino: The Philebus Commentary* (Los Angeles, 1975), 176-177. I am using Allen's edition and translation of the text.

¹³ Michael Allen, "Marsilio Ficino on Plato's Pythagorean Eye," *Modern Language Notes* 97 (1982): 171-182.

Neque vero putandum est propterea Platonem a Pythagora et Socrate, quos quasi numina colit, esse diversum, sed mixtum potius atque utriusque ingenii quasi quendam . . .¹⁴

[But we must not therefore suppose that Plato differs from Pythagoras or from Socrates (for he worshipped them both as if they were almost divine), but rather that he is compounded from them both and has both of their geniuses . . .]

Ficino adds:

In his quae sensibus subiacent partes Heracliti tuebatur. Porro in his quae ad intelligentiam pertinent Pythagorae maxime acquiescebat. In rebus autem civilibus Socratem suum amplectebatur.¹⁵

[For those matters which are subordinate to the senses Plato looked to the partisans of Heraclitus; then for those pertaining to intellectual understanding he agreed for the most part with the followers of Pythagoras; but in civil matters he embraced his own Socrates.]

Allen claims that Plato's indebtedness to his predecessors is the source of the triple-eye concept—at least as the concept is understood by Ficino. Pythagoras is the philosopher associated with the idea of the heavenly eye, and Allen asserts that "the wisest men in Greece" seemed to be saying that Plato saw not only "natural" things with the eye of Heraclitus and his followers, and "moral" or "civil" things with Socrates' eye, but also divine things, that is, the Ideas, with the third eye of Pythagoras.¹⁶ Traherne's concept of the "infant-eye" is essentially the same as the "Pythagorean eye" in Ficino. Traherne's indebtedness to Ficino is evident in what has become known as Traherne's "Ficino Notebook," in which Traherne copied over eighty-five pages of passages from Ficino's commentaries, including sections from Ficino's *Philebus* commentary.¹⁷ Just as Ficino describes the third eye of Pythagoras, Traherne believes that the two natural eyes see worldly things while one eye is connected to the soul and the mind.

¹⁴ Allen (above, note 13), 174. Quoted and translated by Allen from *Platonis Opera Omnia* (Florence, 1484), sig.aa^r, col. 1.

¹⁵ Allen (above, note 13), 177.

¹⁶ Allen (above, note 13), 177.

¹⁷ See Traherne's Ficino Notebook (British Museum Ms., Burney 126). Carol M. Sicherman discusses the contents of the notebook, including the passages from *Philebus*, in "Traherne's Ficino Notebook" *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 63 (1969): 73-81; also, see Diane Elizabeth Dreher's "Traherne's Second 'Century': A Source in Ficino," *Notes and Queries* 26 (1979): 434-36.

The Pythagorean "divine eye," the eye of the mind and the soul, permeates nearly all of Traherne's work. Having such a divine eye gives Traherne a unique vision of divine things. Traherne, therefore, portrays himself as a kind of teacher—even prophet—of God's mysteries:

I will open my Mouth in Parables: I will utter Things that have been Kept Secret from the foundation of the World. Things Strange yet Common; Incredible, yet Known; Most High, yet Plain; infinitely Profitable, but not esteemed. (*Centuries* 1.3)

Although Traherne at the beginning of this passage directly references Mathew 13:35, the context and purpose of the quote is similar to the declaration of Pythagoras in Ovid, who tells Numa about the secrets of creation, which he is prepared to share with others:

Et quoniam deus ora movet, sequar ora moventem
rite deum Delphosque meos ipsumque recludam
aethera et augustae reserabo oracula mentis.
Magna nec ingeniis investigata priorum,
quaeque diu latuere, canam . . . (15.143-147)

[And because a God moves my mouth, I will rightly follow the God who drives me, reveal my Delphi and the very heavens themselves, and I will unlock the oracles of the venerable mind. I will sing great things not studied by the minds of past men, things which have long lain hidden . . .]

Here, Pythagoras offers to speak of the great things of creation. Both Traherne and the Pythagoras of Ovid speak as individuals who have had insight into divine wisdom, as individuals whose insight comes through the ability to see beyond the sensual world and approach the heavens. The insight reveals the presence of a "Pythagorean eye" as described by Ficino.

Although there is a close connection between Traherne's "infant eye" and Ficino's (and Ovid's) discussion of the Pythagorean eye, whether or not there is also a Pythagorean connection with what those eyes "see" remains to be examined. Originally, Pythagoras was most known for his belief in the transmigration of the soul and the music of the spheres. Renaissance writers assimilated those Pythagorean basics into a Christian framework, focusing on the harmony of creation and the immortality of the Christian soul. Surprisingly, the influence of Pythagoras on the Renaissance as a whole—especially the Renaissance in England—has been neglected. One fine exception is S. K. Heninger's *Touces of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics*.¹⁸ Although many have questioned

¹⁸ S. K. Heninger Jr., *Touces of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1974). Also, see Heninger's

Heninger's application of Pythagoreanism to his critical approach of Renaissance poetry, most reviewers believe that Heninger has done much to reestablish the importance of Pythagoras in the Renaissance.¹⁹ Humanists accepted Pythagoras as the source of much of Plato's philosophy,²⁰ and such influence made him a significant figure for Renaissance thinkers; Heninger asserts that Pythagoras only "stood behind Aristotle and Plato" in importance.²¹

Renaissance thinkers who influenced Traherne conveyed an understanding of Pythagoreanism that clearly influenced Traherne's own sense of morality, spirituality, and mysticism. In his commonplace book, Traherne references Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans numerous times, and although he mentions many other philosophers as well, Traherne devotes an entire entry to Pythagoras and his followers. In addition, Traherne's various notebooks document many of the works he read, studied, and transcribed; and most of the important figures in the Traherne manuscripts (people such as Theophilus Gale, Henry More, Ficino, Pico de Mirandola, Hermes Trismegistus, and Plato) make direct references to Pythagoras—and there are sources for Pythagoreanism that any Oxford student would have

short article "Pythagorean symbols in Erasmus' Adagia," *Renaissance Quarterly* 21 (1968): 163-65; G. Mallery Masters' "Panurge at the Crossroads: A Mythopoetic Study of the Pythagorean Y in Rabelais's Satirical Romance (QL/33-34)," *Romance Notes* 15 (1973): 134-54; and Beverley Benson's unpublished dissertation, "Pythagorean Aesthetics and the Poetry of John Donne," (Ph.D. diss., U of Oregon, 1972).

¹⁹ In a concluding section of his book, Heninger proposes that most Renaissance poetry attempts to achieve a Pythagorean harmony; Heninger sees the poem as a cosmos in itself. Reviews of his book found in significant journals include the following: Mary Jane Doherty, *Shakespeare Studies* 10 (1977): 357; Howard Baker, *Renaissance Quarterly* 29 (1976): 130-31; James V. Mirolo, *Comparative Literature* 29 (1977): 74-76; O. B. Hardison Jr., *Shakespeare Quarterly* 28 (1977): 121-25.

²⁰ It was accepted in the Renaissance that the subject of Plato's *Timaeus* was in fact a Pythagorean. As Edward Sherburne noted "TIMAEUS LOCURUS, a Pythagorean Philosopher, wrote *de Natura Mundi*; from which piece Plato borrowed the greatest part of his Dialogue entitled *Timaeus*, in the beginning whereof he commends *Timaeus*, as most knowing and skilful in Astronomy" in an appendix to his translation of Manilius' *The Sphere* (London, 1675). Theophilus Gale, whom Traherne read extensively, also concurs with this idea that "in his [Plato's] *Timaeus* Locrus was 'a Pythagorean, from whom he [Plato] received much of his knowledge of God, and of the origins of the Universe' (*Court of the Gentiles* Part II [Oxford, 1670], 175). Also, see Dominic J. O'Meara's *Pythagoras Revived* (Oxford: Oxford U Pr, 1989) in which O'Meara examines to what extent Plato himself was a Pythagorean.

²¹ Heninger, *Touces* (above, note 18), 19.

known.²² The Cambridge Platonists, with whom Traherne has been associated, emphasized the moral implications of Pythagoreanism. Ralph Cudworth praises Pythagoras as "the most eminent of all the ancient philosophers,"²³ and Henry More asserts:

We are already once born according to Nature; our Bodies and Souls being fitly united together by him that is the Father of all Life, and the Lord of Nature . . . but this *Binary* of Body and Soul the *Pythagoreans* would be bold to call but a miserable *ellipsis*, till that Third completing Unite be added . . . that *Divine Nature*, or Spirit of God.²⁴

Although More does not mention a third "eye," he does associate the Pythagoreans with a third element, a "divine nature," which is similar to Ficino's discussion of the nature of the Pythagorean third eye. In addition, More makes the connection between Pythagoras and the Jewish intellectual tradition and accepts the indebtedness of Plato to Pythagoras' moral philosophy:

That *Pythagoras* drew his Knowledge from the *Hebrew* Fountains is what all Writers, Sacred and Prophane, do testifie and aver. That *Plato* took from him the principal part of that Knowledge, touching God, the *Soul's Immortality*, and the *Conduct of Life and Good Manners*, has been doubted by no Man.²⁵

Perhaps the most important source for Traherne's general knowledge of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism can be found in Theophilus Gale's *The Court of the Gentiles*, in which Gale devotes over 80 pages to Pythagoras and his followers.²⁶ Traherne copies more passages from Gale's work than from

²² Pythagoras is discussed by such classical authors as Iamblichus in *De vita Pythagorica liber* (Traherne quotes from *De Vita* in his commonplace book), Ovid in Book XV of the *Metamorphoses*, and Lucian in his *Dialogues*; also Thomas Stanley, a contemporary of Traherne's, discusses Pythagoreanism in detail in *The History of Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London, 1656-60).

²³ Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, (London, 1678), 370.

²⁴ Henry More, "The Purification of a Christian Man's Soul," *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. C. A. Patrides (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U Pr, 1970), 200-12: 205.

²⁵ Henry More, *An Account of Virtue*, trans. Edward Southwell, (London, 1690), 267. This was originally published by More in Latin in 1666 with the title *Enchiridion Ethicum*.

²⁶ Gale (above, note 20). Gale was a true seventeenth-century erudite who in *The Court of the Gentiles* sought to give a history of philosophy that traced all classical philosophical ideas to the Jewish tradition.

any other into his commonplace book. Traherne studied Gale meticulously and gained much of his knowledge of ancient philosophy from him.

The one aspect of Gale's work that would have most interested Traherne is Gale's discussion of the "moral" and "divine" philosophy of the Pythagoreans. Gale writes, "First Pythagoras held positively that the World was made by God, and by him adorned with an excellent Order, Harmonie, and Beauty, as to all its parts"²⁷ and that "Pythagoras held . . . that Men are akin to the Gods."²⁸ For Pythagoras, "the most considerable of all things is to instruct the soul . . . and that men have perfect *felicities* in having a good soul."²⁹ Gale's description of Pythagoras bears a striking resemblance to the sentiment of Traherne's corpus. Traherne, too, focuses on the instruction of the soul as a way to gain felicity: "you must hav Glorious Principles implanted in your nature . . . a Good and Liberal Soul Prone to Delight in the Felicity of all" (1.38). Although not surprising in itself, Traherne also sees that mankind is "akin" to God, for we are made in his image: "Man is made in the Image of GOD, and therefore is a Mirror and Representativ of Him. And therefore in Himself may see GOD, which is His Glory and felicitie" (2.23).

Still, the most relevant aspect of Gale's description is that "First Pythagoras held positively that the World was made by God, and by him adorned with an excellent Order, Harmonie and Beauty, as to all its parts." This description of Pythagoreanism encapsulates the Christian vision of Traherne, particularly in how the reclaimed infant eye should view nature. Traherne explicitly praises the "Order Beauty Melody" of the world (2.74). He sings of a "Heavenly musick" and a "Heavenly Melodie" (3.69), praises the proper spiritual valuing of Orpheus' "Harmonies in Melody" (3.41), as well as the "the Melody of Musick . . . the Beauty of the Excellent," and "the Harmony and the Joys of Heaven" (4.82). It is in Traherne's descriptions of created things that the emphasis on divine harmony can be best seen. As an adult who has acquired the infant eye, Traherne sees a Pythagorean order and harmony everywhere he saw that initial beauty as a child. He first appreciated the superficial beauty of men, but he began to examine the complex order of that beauty. Traherne sees the glory in the very construction of man's anatomy:

Survey the Skin, cut up the Flesh, the Veins
Unfold: The Glory their remains.

²⁷ Gale (above, note 20), 162.

²⁸ Gale (above, note 20), 183.

²⁹ Gale (above, note 20), 166-67.

The Muscles, Fibres, Arteries, and Bones
Are better far than Crowns and precious Stones.
(*"The Person"* 29-32)

Thy Gifts O God alone I prize,
My Tongue, my Eys,
My cheeks, my Lips, my Ears, my Hands, my Feet;
Their Harmony is far more Sweet;
Their Beauty true
(*"The Person"* 59-63)

Here we see that it is now the "Harmony" and "Beauty true" that Traherne is seeing in God's creation, not the simple beauties seen by the child. Traherne initially questions the proper order, the perfection of creation. He wonders "Why also there was not a Better Sun, and better Stars, a Better Sea and Better Creatures" and "Why Men were made no Bigger" (*Centuries* 3.18), but like Pope a century later, he soon understands that whatever is, is right:

A Body like a Mountain is but Cumber
An Endless Body is but idle Lumber.
It Spoils Convers, and Time itself devours,
While Meat in vain, in feeding idle Powers.
Excessiv Bulk being most injurious found,
To those Conveniences which Men have Crownd.
His Wisdom did His Power here repress,
GOD made Man Greater while He made Him less.
(*Centuries* 3.19)

The order of things is what Traherne sees as perfection. The beauty of nature is good in itself, but it is the place each part of creation holds that makes it perfect:

Evry thing in its Place is Admirable Deep and Glorious: out of its Place like a Wandering Bird, is Desolat and Good for Nothing The Sun is Good, only as it relateth to the Stars, to the Seas, to your Ey, to the feilds, &c. As it relateth to the Stars it raiseth their Influences; as to the Seas, it melteth them and maketh the Waters flow; as to your Ey, it bringeth in the Beauty of the World; as to the feilds, it clotheth them with Fruits and flowers. Did it not relate to others it would not be Good. (3.55)

Understanding the relationship between the things of creation is, again, what constitutes reclaiming the infant eye, and Traherne implements his understanding of Pythagoreanism as found in Ficino, Gale, and others. Remember, Traherne's entire purpose for understanding the harmony and beauty of creation is to obtain a state of what he calls "felicity." Traherne writes, "Two things in Perfect Felicity I saw to be requisite: and that

Felicity must be perfect, or not Felicity. The first was the Perfection of its Objects, in Nature Serviceableness Number and Excellency" (3.57); in other words, all things in creation must be perfect in proportion and use. Gale believes that for Pythagoras instructing the soul was the "most considerable of all things" and that men have "perfect felicitie in having a good soul." Gale's description of Pythagoras could be a description of Traherne. Traherne Christianizes the concept, but the goal seems to be the same.

An ability to understand intellectually the harmony and order of creation—which the child perceives naturally—lies at the heart of Traherne's infant eye. The simple appreciation by the child of the natural order can be seen as evidence of God's greatness and universal good. If one regains this infant eye (this Pythagorean eye) as an adult, he will begin to see the order, harmony, and beauty of God's creation; and as a part of that creation, man can then be considered "akin" to God. Without a doubt, Thomas Traherne's work is the result of intense reading, the interweaving of multiple strands of philosophical thought. He is motivated by an intense emotional drive to articulate his understanding of man's relationship to God and to share his visions with the world. Traherne's use of the "infant-eye," innocence, and divine knowledge in his poetry and prose, is the result of many sources including Plato, Plotinus, and the scriptures. However, knowing from his own hand that he considered Pythagoras a "myrror" for Christians and knowing that the texts he studied so closely reveal such striking uses of the "eye" image associated with Pythagoras, and knowing that such a vision leads one to an understanding of the beauty, order, and harmony in creation, it becomes quite possible, indeed probable, that—in addition to the others—Traherne had Pythagoras in mind. Ultimately, the significance of such an influence demonstrates that Traherne's concept of the infant eye is more than just a proto-Romantic praise of childhood or a reflection of the Platonic preexistence of the soul; consistent with Renaissance beliefs concerning Pythagoras, the infant eye and the understanding that eye brings are part of an intellectual, moral, and spiritual process by which mankind can better understand the relationship between God and His created world.

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