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Magic and melancholy at the Vatican library.

Source: BHA

Document Type: Article (journal)

Title: Magic and melancholy at the Vatican library.

Main Author: Mandel, Corinne

Journal Title: Explorations in Renaissance culture ; Vol. 28, issue 1 (summer 2002), p. 31-74 ; 0098-2474

Description: 44 p. : 20 ill.

Abstract: Traces the history of Sixtus V's Vatican Library complex as background to a discussion of the cycle of paintings (destroyed) that adorned the long facade of the Vatican Library facing the Vatican Palace. Analyzes the iconographic program, designed by Federico Ranaldi, which comprised 18 personifications of human learning situated above 18 famous men. Focuses on the inclusion of magic squares in the depictions of Arithmetic and Pythagoras and ties their presence to Sixtus V's Franciscan heritage. Draws on Domenico Fontana's description of the cycle contained in his treatise Della trasportatione dell'obelisco Vaticano (1590). The paintings were executed by numerous artists working under the direction of Giovanni Guerra and Cesare Nebbia.

Subject(s): Sixtus V, pope, 1521-1590

Sixte V, pape, 1521-1590

Pythagoras, ca.582-ca.507 B.C.

Pythagore, v.582-v.507 av. J.C.

Ranaldi, Federico, 16th c.

Ranaldi, Federico, 16~e s.

Nebbia, Cesare, ca.1536-ca.1614

Nebbia, Cesare, v.1536-v.1614

Guerra, Giovanni, 1544-1618

Fontana, Domenico, 1543-1607

Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica vaticana --Roma (ITA)

Mural painting

Peinture murale

Commissions

Commande d'oeuvre d'art

Famous men (iconography)

Hommes illustres (iconographie)

MAGIC AND MELANCHOLY AT THE VATICAN LIBRARY

CORINNE MANDEL

I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not, or out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I know not; God knoweth): That he was caught up into paradise, and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter.
(2 Cor. 12.1–4 Vulgate)

WHEN DOMENICO FONTANA published his treatise *Della trasportatione dell'obelisco Vaticano* in 1590, he gave to posterity knowledge of the extraordinary engineering skills entailed in raising not one but four obelisks for Pope Sixtus V (Felice Peretti, 1585–90). He also provided a description of the numerous structures that he had erected for his patron, including the nature of their decorative embellishments. Of all of Fontana's descriptions of the cycles adorning his buildings, those concerning the Vatican Library façades, painted *a graffito* between the end of 1587 and the beginning of 1589, are the most comprehensive (Fontana, *Della trasportatione* [1978] 94^r–96^v). This is especially felicitous since the *chiaroscuro* paintings of the inner courtyard façades are at best in ruinous condition and those on the long façade facing the Vatican Palace, with which I am here concerned, are no longer extant (see Fig. 1).¹ In particular, Fontana's treatment of *Arithmetic* and *Pythagoras* is so unusually lucid as to include two illustrations of the tablets once held by the personification and her historical exemplar (see Figs. 4–5; Fontana [1978] 94^v). Significantly, these are the only illustrations documenting a part of any Sixtine cycle in the entire treatise. Together with the reproductions of these components in the expanded 1604 edition of Fontana's book (see Fig. 6; 84^r), they are the only extant visual evidence of specific parts of the long façade cycle, unless one considers Giovanni Battista Mola's 1663 abbreviated representations incompletely copied from Fontana (51–52).

To say the least, these tablets are extremely provocative, since they are magic squares, or cabalistic *câmê'im* (Budge 390–405; Nowotny 46–57; Calder 196–99). Not only has no one ever discussed their nature,

but none of the three Early Modern commentators on the façade (Fontana; Pansa 34–35; Mola) considered them in the context of the monumental painted cycle. In other words, no one has ever asked how it was that magic squares came to adorn the Vatican Library façade; how they merited so significant a place in Fontana's treatise and, one could reason, in the cycle commissioned by his patron, Pope Sixtus V; and how a staunch Counter Reformation pope, who had condemned the practice of judicial astrology, hydromancy, chiromancy, and the like, could have condoned the use of magic squares on the façade of the most important library in all of Catholic Christendom? My purpose is to address these questions and to argue that the presence of magic squares on the Vatican Library façade was wholly consonant with Sixtus V's Franciscan heritage. This tradition recognized that the natural world, created by God "in measure, and number, and weight" (Wisdom 11.21 Vulgate), was the means to achieve an ecstatic rapture, or mystical union with God, following St. Francis on Mt. Alverna. As such, the Franciscan manner of approaching God was not at all unlike the ancient Egyptian and cabalistic manner, for the ancients likewise attained knowledge of the divine by studying natural phenomena. This is not to suggest that this knowledge was available to just anyone, much less that it was (or is) easy to comprehend; only the chosen few—notably St. Paul, St. Francis, and, according to the evidence that I shall present in this study, Christ's vicar Sixtus V and his intimates at the papal court—were given access to the most complex secrets of the divine.² But before we turn to the magic squares and the long façade, it is necessary to provide the reader with some idea of the history and character of Sixtus V's Vatican Library complex.

Federico Ranaldi, the custodian of Sixtus V's Vatican Library, has the distinction of having penned the iconographical program for both the exterior and interior of the library. Although his final written program has not been preserved (if indeed it once existed), we do have Ranaldi's early thoughts on the subject, which he jotted down in his day book, currently housed in the archive of the Vatican Library (qtd. in Frajese 124–30). This document indicates that early on Ranaldi was thinking of all manner of subjects related to books, ranging from the paper making process to ancient pagan and biblical *uomini famosi*. While one would be hard pressed to find so much as an outline of the final scheme in these notes, Angela Böck has shown that many of the subjects treated at length by Ranaldi were ultimately translated into paint (*Das Dekorationsprogramm* 21–22). Hence, the paper making process came to adorn the Sala degli Scrittori, the room by which one first entered the

library to be taken into the Salone Sistino, the main reading room; the inventors of the alphabet decorated the piers supporting the Salone Sistino; the ancient libraries and schools faced the church councils on the Salone Sistino's walls; the Good Works of Sixtus V were ranged around the walls of both the Salone Sistino and two rooms of the private library; the Fathers of the Church decorated the walls of the private library; and "le discipline et arti" as well as such great thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Zeno, and Julius Caesar adorned the façade of the library facing the Vatican Palace.

By far the most learned treatment of the completed Vatican Library cycle was written by Sixtus V's "right hand man" (Odier 72), the Augustinian Angelo Rocca, and published in 1591 (Rocca 272; Hess, "La Biblioteca Vaticana" 1: 143–52; Böck, "La Biblioteca Vaticana" 77–90). From Rocca, one learns that the library was painted by numerous artists working under the direction of the *impresarii* of Sixtine Rome, Giovanni Guerra and Cesare Nebbia. One also learns that Silvio Antoniano, secretary of the College of Cardinals, and Pietro Galesino, apostolic protonotary, wrote the inscriptions for the inventors of the alphabet, ancient libraries, and church councils, while Guglielmo Bianco, the pope's *cameriere*, penned the verses accompanying the Good Works of Sixtus V. Antoniano, Galesino, and Rocca himself, not to mention the pope, may well have assisted Ranaldi in his choice of figures for the library's façades as well, although these figures required only identifying Latin inscriptions and attributes. But, alas, Rocca chose to omit the paintings that once adorned the Vatican Library façades. Whereas Rocca provides essential information on the program's ideators, then, one must turn to Fontana's treatise for the most complete and authoritative description of the façades, including the long, southern façade with which I am concerned.

Unlike his usual, rather matter-of-fact method of providing only the names of personifications and historical personages contained in Sixtine cycles, Fontana begins his description of the library's program by speaking of the "misteriose pitture," the mysterious paintings—or paintings of mysteries³—adornning his architecture. He reports that the cycle was comprised of eighteen personifications of human learning, or philosophy, situated above eighteen *uomini famosi*, proceeding from *Good Leisure* (*Otium Bonum*) and *Scipio*, *Honour* and *Julius Caesar*, through *Ethics* and *Plato*, *Theology* and the *Master of the Sentences* (*Magister Sententiæ*; Peter Lombard) at the façade's center, to *Immortality* and *Hercules*, *Genius* and *Socrates* (Fontana [1978] 94^f–95^v).⁴ Fontana explains the general

nature of the figures' appearances, and he provides a detailed description of their attributes. He also explains that these figurative components were interspersed with elements of Sixtus V's heraldry: lions, pear branches, triple mountains (*monti*), and stars (see Fig. 7). Domenico Castelli's well-known drawing of the façade, contained in an album likely compiled sometime before 1655 (Kirwin 289 n 41), helps to clarify Fontana's description of the placement: the *uomini famosi* once flanked the windows on the *piano nobile* and the personifications the windows on the *secondo piano* (see Fig. 2).

As Fontana describes them, *Arithmetic* and *Pythagoras* were located in the third bay of the Vatican Library façade, to the right of the window. *Arithmetic* was depicted as a young woman holding a square divided into nine cells inscribed with numbers that added up to fifteen in every direction (see Fig. 3, left; Fig. 4). Her magic square, or cabalistic *câmê'a*, belonged to the planet Saturn (Budge 394; Nowotny 50; Calder 196–99). *Pythagoras* was situated directly beneath *Arithmetic* (see Fig. 5). He held a similar square divided into sixteen cells inscribed with numbers that added up to thirty-four in every direction (see Fig. 3, center). This square also contained the name ΘΕΟΣ at the top in addition to three sigils, one on each of the remaining sides: the zodiacal sign of Sagittarius was at the left; the sigil for the planet Jupiter was at the bottom; and the alchemical sigil for quicksilver, or mercury, was at the right of the square (Agrippa 2: 208; Biedermann, *Handlexicon* 208, 305; Shepherd 310 n 3066).⁵ Fontana volunteers that this square was created on the basis of an antique medal, but he says no more. It seems reasonable to posit that said medal had pagan origins as opposed to Christian, given the nature of its sigils and its ownership by the ancient sage Pythagoras in Ranaldi's program. At the same time, this medal and the magic square that it spawned ought to have accommodated the inevitably Christian meaning of the "misteriose pittura" painted for the pope: according to the extant evidence concerning the long, southern façade, the mythological and historical figures from the pagan past were accompanied by historical figures from the Christian past; notably Peter Lombard, the *Master of the Sentences*, was accorded the key, central location with the pagan Plato. This central pairing of Plato and Peter Lombard provides and dictates the means by which all other elements of the façade must be interpreted—magic squares included. The conspicuous presence of elements of the Sixtine heraldry then reinforce the fundamentally Christian message that Ranaldi orchestrated for this façade.

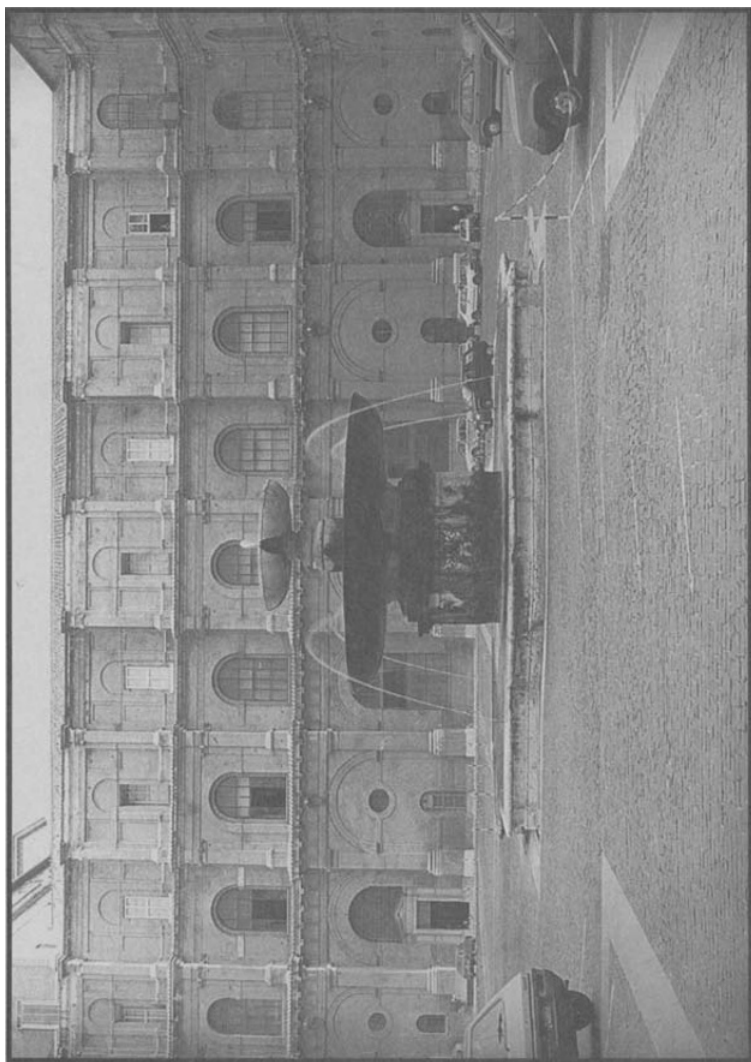


Fig. 1. Domenico Fontana. Vatican Library, southern façade. 1587–88. Vatican City. (Photo: Musei Vaticani Archivio Fotografico XXXIV–29–72)

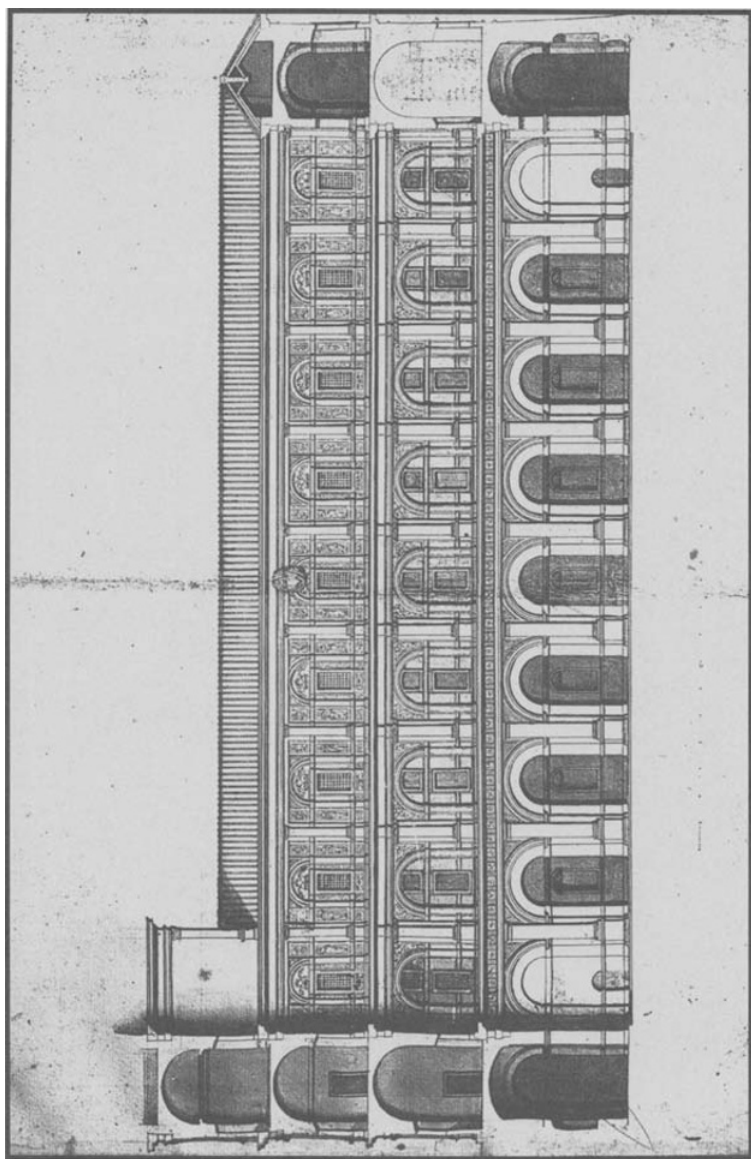


Fig. 2. Domenico Castelli. Drawing of the southern façade of the Vatican Library, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 4409, fol. 34^r, c. 1634. (Photo: Musei Vaticani Archivio Fotografico XXXIII-61-22)

Dell'Obel.Vatic. & fabriche di N.S.

presenta la Nobiltà, e l'altra la Ricchezza, e sotto se ha scritto, OTIVM BONVM, Nell'angolo dell'arco, che risponde sotto questa pittura, è figurato Scipione Africano col suo nome scritto, SCIPIO, in habito di giovane militare, e li tiene la destra al petto, e nella sinistra vn bastone, & ha le spalle appoggiate ad vn Trofeo d'armi.

Al lato destro della seconda finestra sta l'immagine della Retorica coronata come Regina, tenendo nella destra vna spada nuda, & nell'altra vn libro ferrato, & a piedi la Sfinge, & sotto i piedi ha scritto, RHETORICE, nel triangolo dell'arco, che risponde sotto lei è figurato Marco Tullio Togato, con il nome, M. TVLLIVS, che tiene vn libro aperto, e la penna in mano, come volesse scrivere, & con gli occhi intenti ad alto.

E al sinistro lato dell'istessa finestra è dipinta l'istoria in figura d'vna femina con l'ali, e scriue sopra vna tauola ritonda, e sotto i piedi vi si legge, HISTORIA, Nel triangolo dell'arco, che risponde sotto lei è figurato Tito Livio col suo nome, T. LIVIVS, in figura d'huomo graue, barbuto, e con la toga, quale sta scriuendo appoggiato ad vn Obelisco, & ad vna Colonna a lunaca.

E dalla destra della terza finestra è figurata l'Aritmetica in vna femina, che tiene vna tauola simile alla posta al margine segnata con alquanti numeri, che sommano 15. per ogni verso, e sotto i piedi suoi li legge, ARITHMETICA, E nell'angolo dell'arco, che risponde sotto lei è figurato Pittagora vecchio col suo nome, PYTHAGORAS, che guarda all'ingiù, e col braccio destro regge vna tauola simile alla posta di sotto, nella quale sono pur signati caratteri numerali in questa forma, che fanno il numero 34. cauati dall'ordine d'vna medaglia antica, che raggirati per ogni uerso sommano il medesimo.

2	9	4
7	5	3
6	1	8

16	3	5	13
5	10	11	3
9	6	7	12
4	15	14	1

Al sinistro lato della terza finestra si vede la Geometria in forma d'una femina, che tiene una tauola in mano, dentro la quale sono figurati due triangoli, che s'interfegano l'un l'altro, e sotto i piedi ha scritto, GEOMETRIA. Et nel triangolo dell'arco sotto lei sta figurato Euclide col suo nome, EVCLIDES, che mostra in una tauola diuersi segni di Geometria.

Alla destra della quarta finestra è figurata la Fisica, come donna appoggiata ad una Colonna col gomito del braccio, sostenendosi il mento con mano, a piedi di essa un globo, e sotto ui si legge, PHYSICA, E nel triangolo dell'arco di sotto è figurato Aristotile vecchio col nome, ARISTOTELES, che legge un libro.

All'altro lato di questa finestra è dipinta la Politica in figura di donna, che tiene una bilancia giusta con la destra, appoggiandosi l'altra al fianco, e sotto a i piedi suoi è scritto, POLITICA, e nel triangolo dell'arco sotto questa è figurato Giustiano Imperatore col nome, IVSTINIANVS IMP. che tiene nella destra il Caduceo di Mercurio appoggiandolo ad un globo terrestre, dal quale nasce un Cornucopia,

Fig. 3. Magic Squares of *Arithmetic* and *Pythagoras*, from Domenico Fontana, *Della trasportatione dell'obelisco Vaticano* (Rome: D. Basa, 1590) 94^v. (Photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Stamp. Barb. N X 43)



Fig. 4. Reconstruction of *Arithmetic*. (Rendered by Janette Bewley)



Fig. 5. Reconstruction of *Pythagoras*. (Rendered by Janette Bewley)

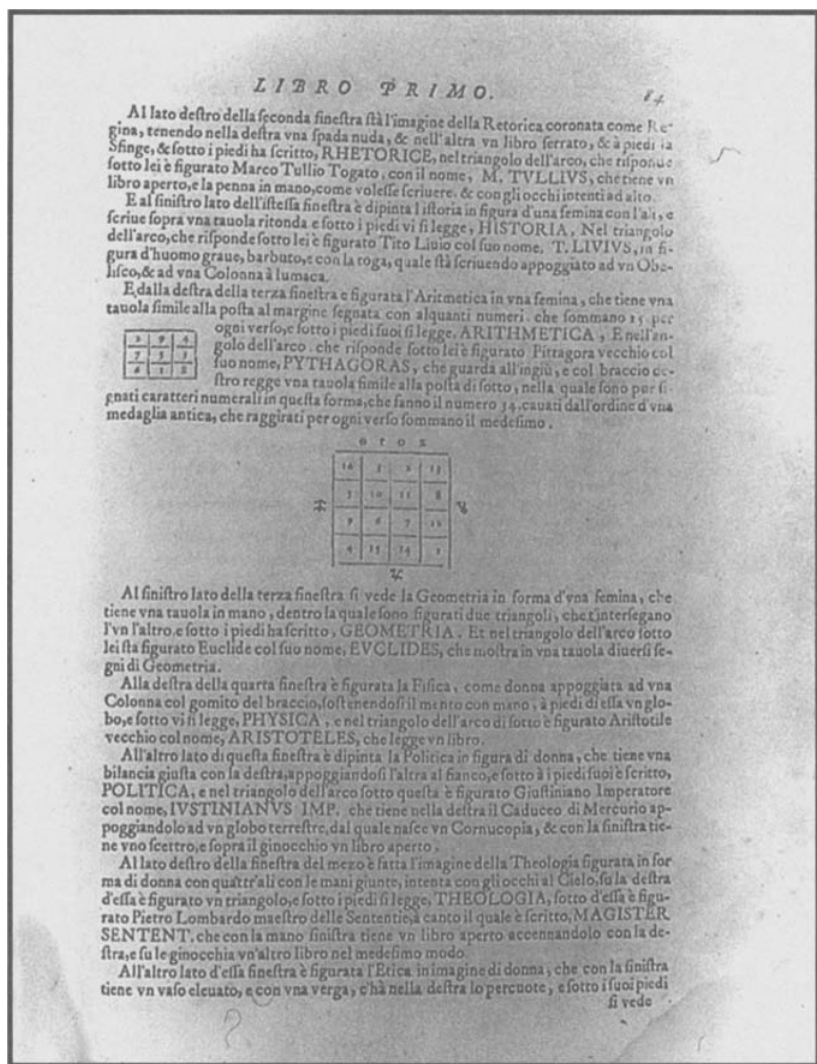


Fig. 6. Magic Squares of *Arithmetic* and *Pythagoras*, from Domenico Fontana, *Della trasportatione dell'obelisco Vaticano* (Naples: C. Vitale, 1604) 98^v. (Photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chigi S 93)



Fig. 7. *Stemma* of Sixtus V. Vault of stairway adjacent to the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican, c. 1586. Vatican City. (Photo: the author)



Fig. 8. Albrecht Dürer. *Melencolia I*. Engraving, 1514. (Photo: National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. B6, 547 1943.3.3522, Rosenwald Collection)

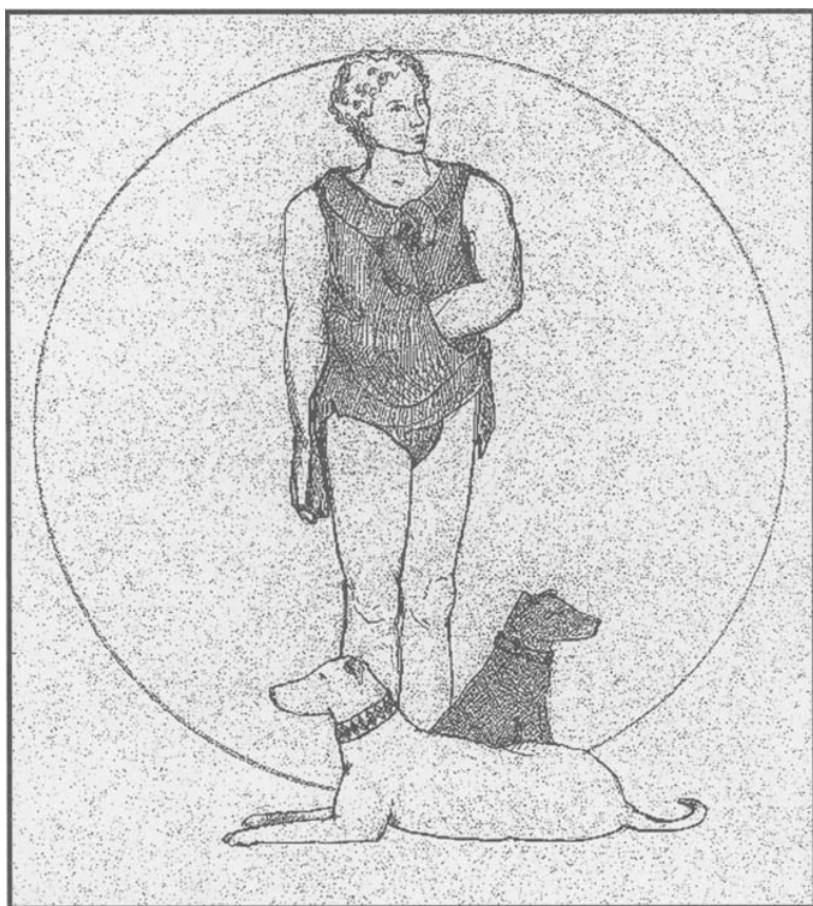


Fig. 9. Reconstruction of *Genius*. (Rendered by Janette Bewley)

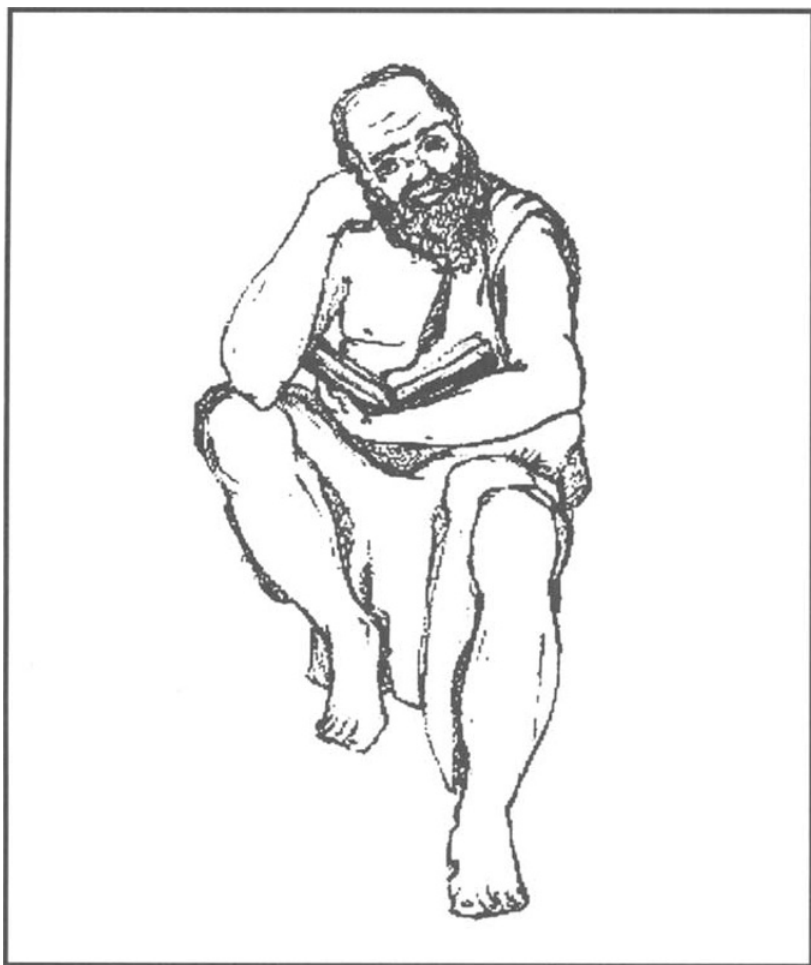


Fig. 10. Reconstruction of *Socrates*. (Rendered by Janette Bewley)

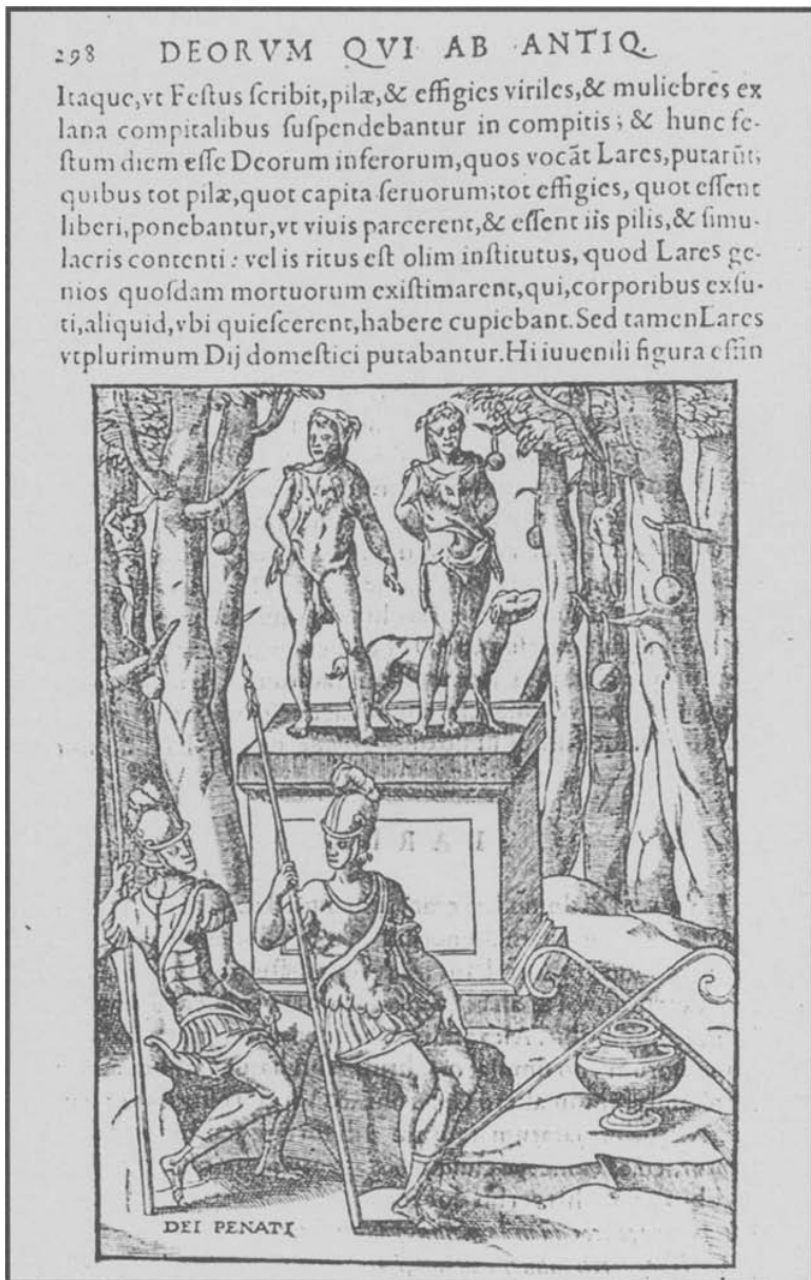


Fig. 11. *Lares and Penates*, from Vincenzo Cartari, *Le Imagini de i Dei* (Venice: Francesco Ziletti, 1580) 298. (Photo: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze, Palatino 10.4.3.3)



Fig. 12. Reconstruction of *Logic*. (Rendered by Janette Bewley)

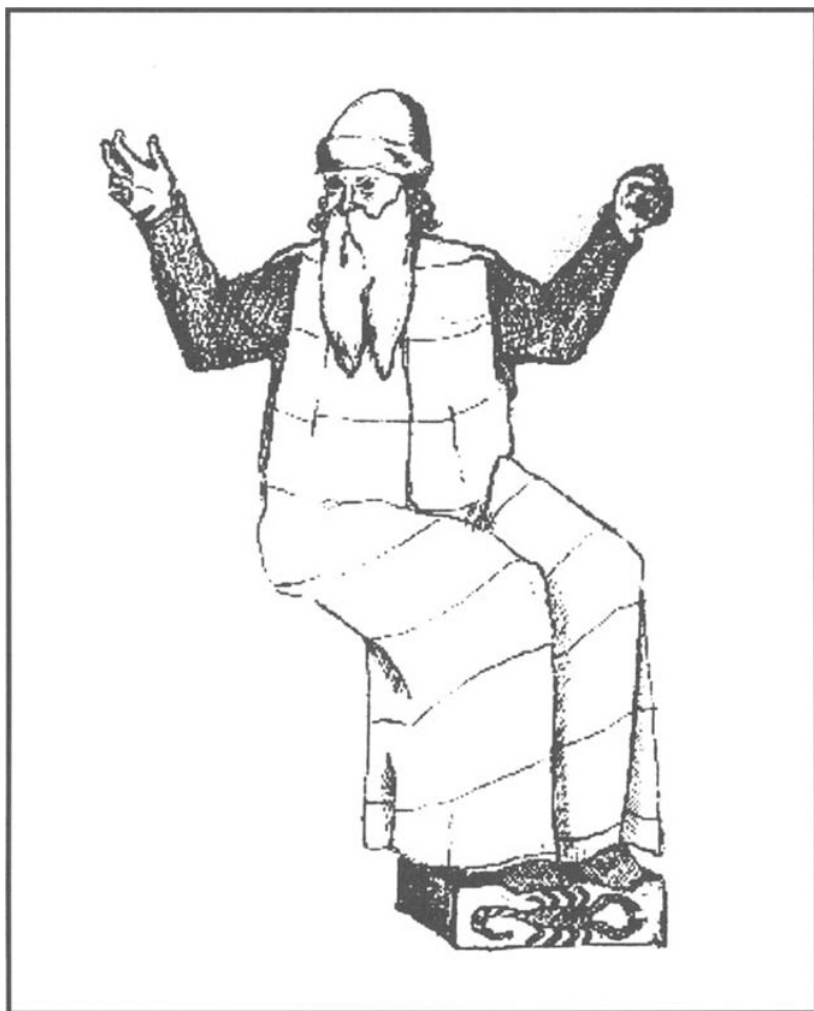


Fig. 13. Reconstruction of *Zeno*. (Rendered by Janette Bewley)



Fig. 14. *Egyptian Hercules*. Third pier, Salone Sistino, Vatican Library, c. 1589. Vatican City. (Photo: Musei Vaticani Archivio Fotografico XXXII-109-17)

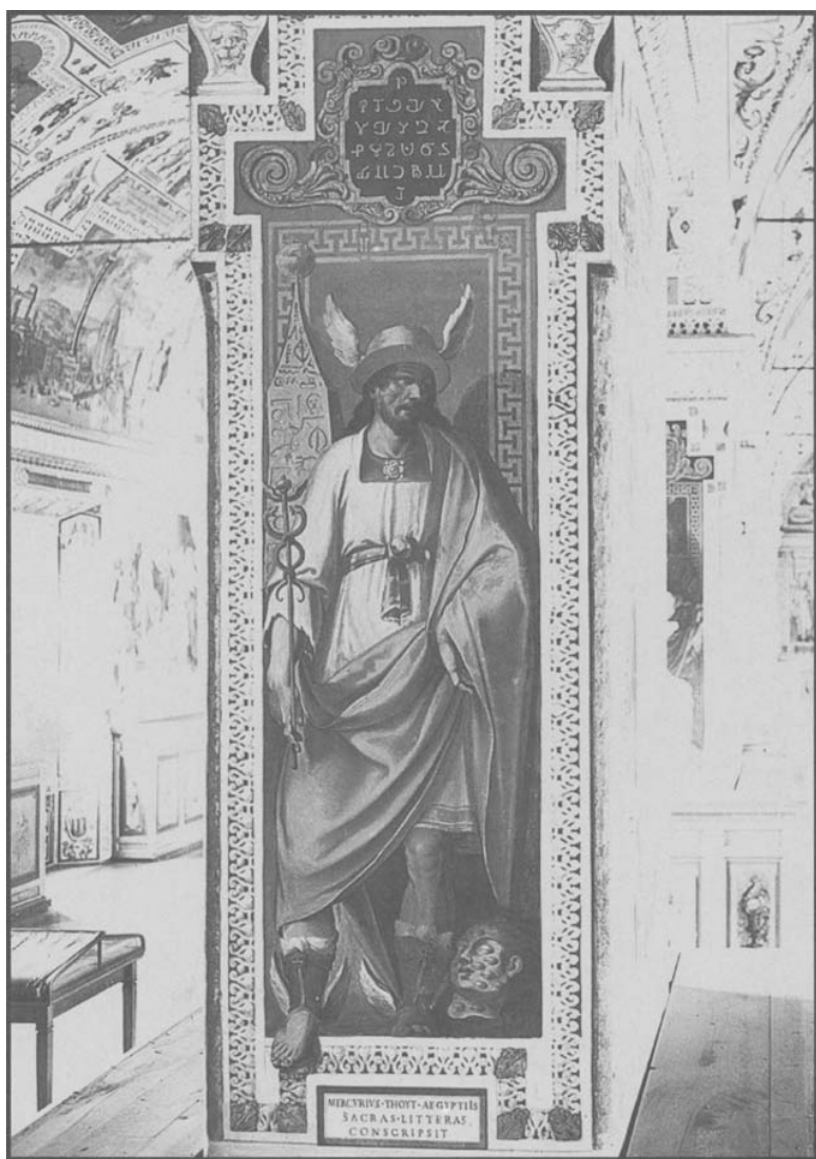


Fig. 15. *Egyptian Mercury*. Third pier, Salone Sistino, Vatican Library, c. 1589. Vatican City. (Photo: Musei Vaticani Archivio Fotografico XXXII-109-18)

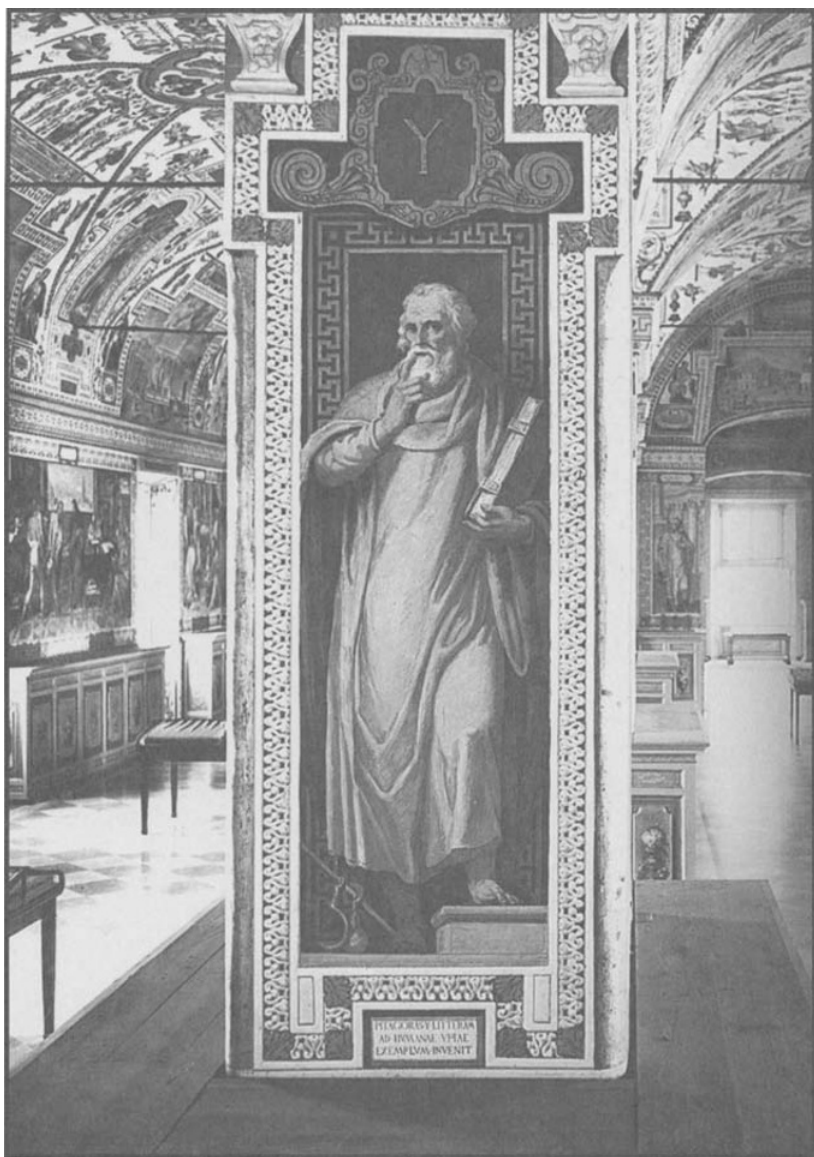


Fig. 16. *Pythagoras*. Fifth pier, Salone Sistino, Vatican Library, c. 1589. Vatican City. (Photo: Musei Vaticani Archivio Fotografico XXXII-109-11)

CXXXVIII

LIB. III.

SILENTIO DEVM COLE.

Symb. LXIII.



Fig. 17. *Silentio Deum Cole*, from Achilles Bocchio, *Symbolicarum Quaestionum* (Bologna: Apud Societatem Typographiae Bononiensis, 1574) cxxxviii, Lib. III, Symb. LXIII (Photo: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze. Rinasc. B. 361)



Fig. 18. *Mater Omnium*. Third window embrasure, northern wall, Salone Sistino, Vatican Library, c. 1589. Vatican City.
(Photo: the author)

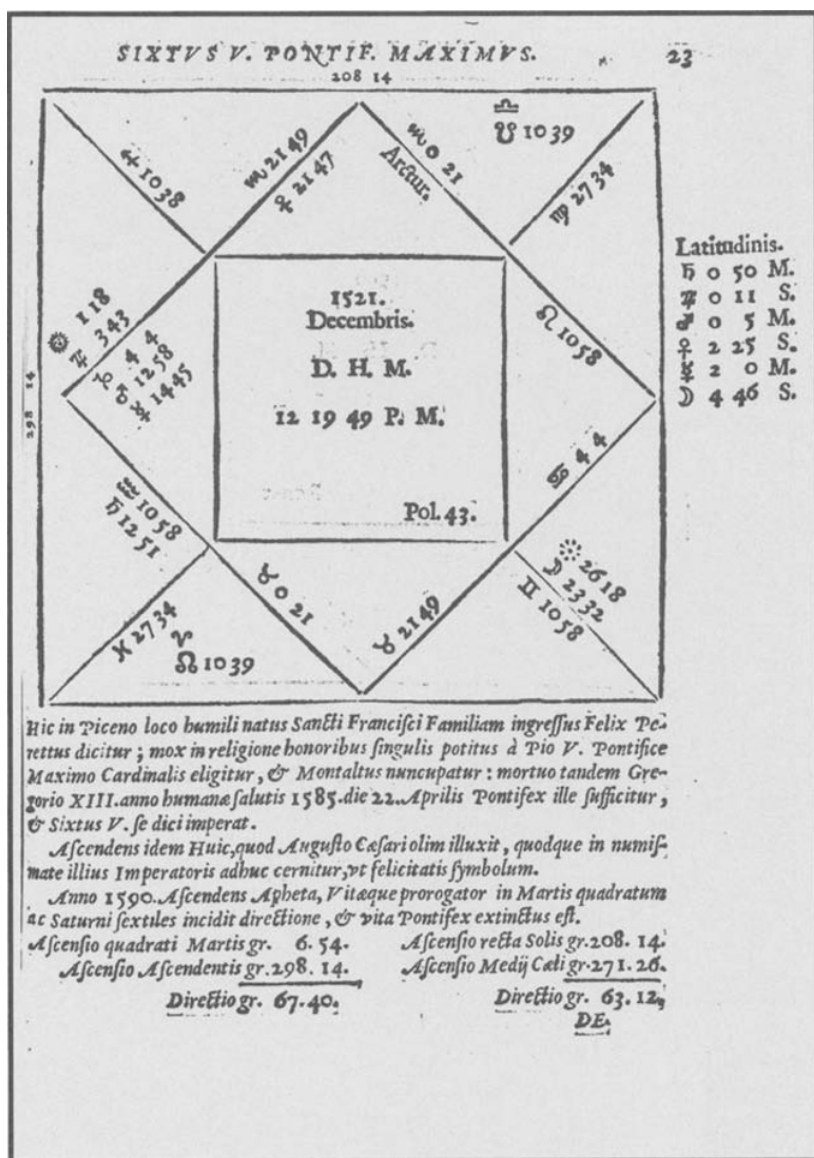


Fig. 19. Natal Chart of Felice Peretti (Sixtus V.), from A. Argolus, *De diebus criticis et aegrorum decubitu libri duo* (Padua, 1639) 23. (Photo: Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto)

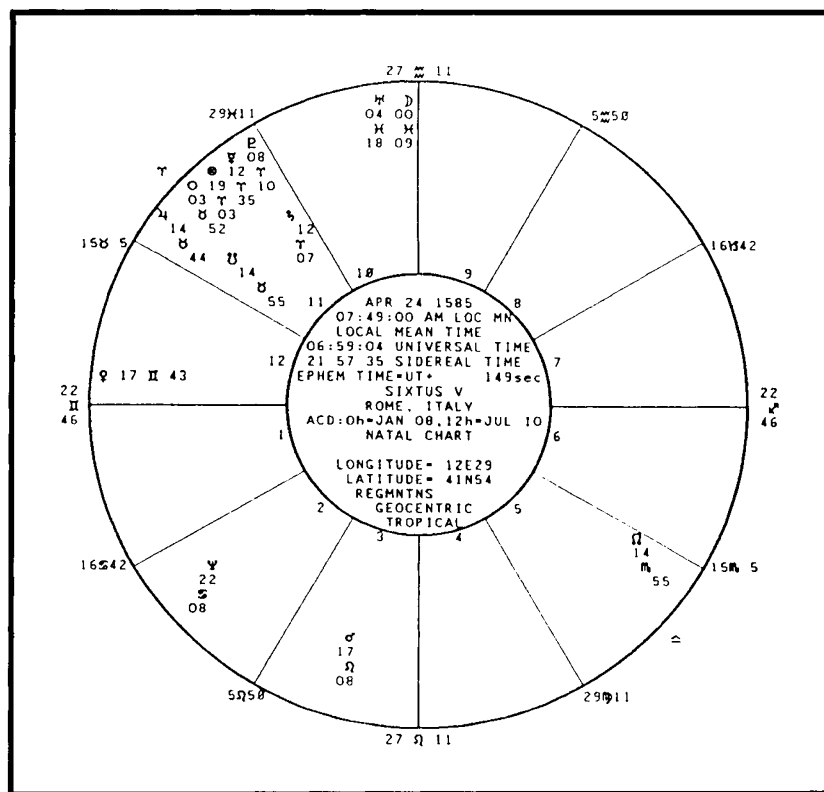


Fig. 20. Electoral Chart of Sixtus V, by Neil F. Michelson of Astro Computing Services.

As most every specialist in the history of Renaissance art knows well, Pythagoras's square is the same as that in Albrecht Dürer's 1514 *Melencolia I* (see Fig. 8) and belongs to the planet Jupiter (Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 325–27). At the library, this fact was underlined by the planetary sigil for Jupiter; by the astrological sigil for Sagittarius, Jupiter's zodiacal domicile; and by the name $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, the Greek name for Zeus or Jupiter, the equivalent to both the Egyptian Mercury or Thoyt, otherwise known as Hermes Trismegistos, and the Judaeo-Christian Jehovah or God (Rocca 102–04; Bongo 29^v–37^r; Via 15). Jupiter's ownership of the square was further underlined in the 1604 version, albeit to the detriment of Mercury, ruler of the eponymous element: in addition to the name $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ and the sigils for Jupiter and Sagittarius, the alchemical mercury was replaced by an element ruled by the king of the Graeco-Roman gods, namely stannum (see Fig. 6, center; Della Porta 107–08;

Biedermann, *Handlexicon* 244–45; Stillman 5, 9). Notwithstanding the differences between the 1590 and 1604 versions, *Pythagoras's* Jovean square evokes the “Pythagorean axiom” in which the number four, that is to say the common denominator of the cells of the square, signifies divinity and the source of nature (Rocca 102–04; Bongo 29^v–37^r; Calder 196–98). It also conjures reminiscences of Pythagoras's exalted position among medieval and Renaissance hermeticists, who assigned to the ancient philosopher a position very nearly, if not wholly, consonant with that of ΘΕΟΣ (Calvesi 48–49; Heninger 234–55).

Having determined that the tablet held by Pythagoras is the same as that in Dürer's famous engraving, we might not be imprudent to consider the way in which the magic square functions in the earlier work. Of course, scholars are by no means in agreement regarding the meaning of *Melencolia I* (Schuster 1: 18–84), but the square of Jupiter, unlike the other component parts of the engraving, has not been subjected to too wide a variety of interpretations to render it inaccessible for the current context. In particular, I shall consider two interpretations that are diametrically opposed, yet drawn from the traditional corpus of Renaissance hermeticism, and actually in agreement on the fundamental issue of function. Erwin Panofsky proposed that the square acts as a palliative to the maleficent influence of the planet Saturn on the melancholic genius (325–27). By erecting the square, Dürer's melancholic may be assuaged of what is tantamount to the disease inflicted by the planet Saturn, although ultimately not even the power of Jupiter can avert the melancholic's “sad but sublime destiny” (Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 327). Maurizio Calvesi, on the contrary, has argued that Dürer's Jovean talisman is acting in tandem, not at odds, with Saturn, and hence with the Saturnine melancholic, in order to attain the alchemist's Philosopher's Stone, or union of the adept with God resulting in knowledge of the divine (37–96). In this way the sphere of humanity's knowledge, symbolized by the square of Jupiter, may be wed with Saturn's sphere of theology. Reminiscent, in a sense, of J. A. Endres's interpretation of Dürer's tablet as a symbol of Christ's Passion (110–20), Calvesi's thesis unites pagan and Christian readings in a manner that agrees with the syncretistic methodology used by Sixtine iconographers (Mandel, “Simbolismo” 661–92), a methodology dictated by the presence of Plato and Peter Lombard at the center of the long, southern façade.

If one may reason that the magic squares once adorning the Vatican Library façade ought to have attracted planetary vibes that worked in unison with one another, since there is no indication that *Arithmetic*

was, or ought to have been, in any way hostile towards *Pythagoras*, and if one may take as a given their talismanic function, then *Arithmetic* could well have held a tablet of benefic lead. As such, her square would have aided one's birth, provided safety, imbued one with power, and insured success in the political arena (Agrippa 158). On the basis of the planet Saturn and his metal, it also could have symbolized knowledge of divinity as well as death, specifically martyrdom, a Christian reading seemingly opposed to the hermetic one (Picinelli 50, 169, 737). *Pythagoras* might then have held a square of similarly auspicious silver to provide wealth, love, honor, and dignity, as well as peace and concord in the political realm, especially since Mercury (albeit the planet, not the chemical) acted favorably when his square was inscribed on silver or on stannum, among other metals, bringing to the bearer fortune, wealth, intellect, prophetic powers, and an ability to understand the occult through dreams (Agrippa 158). According to Fontana's 1590 version of Jupiter's square, the alchemical mercury could have signified rebirth. Jupiter and his metal could have symbolized the understanding of human knowledge, especially as regards political and scientific accomplishments (Ficino, *De Vita* 92^v; Picinelli 724–26). According to the 1604 version, the Jovean meaning just set out would have been reiterated by the stannum's signification and further complemented by knowledge of the divine (Picinelli 737–38).

Having said all of this, I must pose two fundamental questions. First, why is the alchemical sigil for mercury used in conjunction with Jupiter's magic square in the first edition of Fontana's treatise? Was this a typographical error possibly pointed out by the pope or one of his advisors and later rectified by Fontana or one of his humanist friends in the Neapolitan edition of 1604, or was the later emendation an understandable but nevertheless erroneous one that overlooked the inherent Egyptian connection between ΘΕΟΣ and Mercury? Secondly, how did *Arithmetic* with her Saturnine talisman and *Pythagoras* with his Jovean one relate to one another and to the program of the Vatican Library façade? Although an analysis of the thirty-six figures once populating the façade is quite without the bounds of an article, it is possible to address these questions by considering *Genius* and *Socrates*, with which Fontana's description of the program concluded, and *Logic* and *Zeno*, the two figures devised to relate most clearly to the pope himself, and to the profoundly personal message once conveyed on the façade.

According to Fontana, *Genius* and *Socrates* were located to the right of the ninth window. *Genius* was represented as a young man wearing

dog's skin and fully contained within a circle, with a hound and a greyhound at his feet (see Fig. 9). *Socrates* was seated, with elbow on knee and hand under chin, reading an open book that he held in his left hand (see Fig. 10). In order to begin to understand the meaning of these Sixtine figures, it is imperative to address the *locus classicus* of each and to trace the lineage through the medieval and Renaissance eras, paying special attention to the medieval period, especially to the twelfth century, in which Peter Lombard penned *The Sentences*—and in which St. Francis was born.

For the ancients, there were two kinds of genius, much as there were two types of planetary influence. One type of genius was malevolent and cruel, while the other was virtuous and well-intentioned. The good genius was a god of hospitality, good times, generation, custody, and nature. This genius tempered and ruled the birth star of every man and woman and took care of them until their souls were transported at death (Cartari 450–51). For the ancient Romans, the genius in his positive sense was believed to have encompassed all of the virtues and to have resided in the person of the emperor from the time of birth. As the genius was frequently regarded as emanating from Jupiter, then the emperor, though not deified until after death, still had something godlike within his mortal form (Mattingly 113–14). Much as the emperor's virtues were applied to the realm that he ruled, his genius came to stand for the empire, a transferral facilitated by the intimate relationship between the Lares, the household gods, the Penates, the city guardians, and the genius from earliest times. The Sixtine *Genius* would appear to have drawn on this early Roman connection, since the Lares were youths who dressed in dogs' skins and who invariably had dogs at their feet (see Fig. 11). Since the dog's skin and dog symbolized the fidelity and diligence with which the Lares guarded the home (Cartari 448, 450), then *Genius* could have been understood as guarding the Vatican Library and its environs in a manner not unlike the talismanic tablets. In such a context, the pagan *Genius* ought to have corresponded to its Christian equivalent, the Guardian Angel (Scott 96–99).

Since Fontana specifies that the dogs at the feet of *Genius* were a hound and a greyhound, then these breeds would have been significant in their own right. In antiquity, the hound had many meanings, most of which were perpetuated through the middle ages and the Renaissance. The hound was particularly valued by Pythagoras and his Platonic followers, who believed it to be the most virtuous of animals and thus the best possible carrier of the human soul that left the body at death (Eisler

163). Of course, Christianity rejected the pagan theory of the transmigration of the soul. Still, as the receptacle of the immortal soul, the hound was intimately related to the circle encompassing *Genius*: the circle has no beginning and no end and therefore signifies the perfection of God, the cosmos and immortality (Valeriano 485–89; Ripa 1: 208; Reuterswärd 53–69). In tandem with the *Genius-cum*-Guardian Angel, the encompassing circle suggests the very form of heaven when understood according to the Pauline and Pseudo-Dionysian notion that “intelligibles,” that is to say form without matter or geometrical forms, are manifestations of divine ideas (French and Cunningham 218–24; Krailsheimer 97–98; Wind 227). As a “sensible,” or natural creation, the hound housing the human soul functions as a counterpart to the “intelligible” circle housing the *Genius*-Guardian Angel. As St. Paul himself revealed, “the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity” (Rom. 1.20 Vulgate); and as the Franciscan St. Bonaventure explained, “We may behold God in the mirror of visible creation, not only by considering creatures as vestiges of God, but also by seeing Him in them; for He is present in them by His essence, His power, and His presence” (50–51).

Hounds were also used to symbolize the scholar, who was on a perpetual hunt for knowledge, a particularly apposite meaning for the Vatican Library. By the medieval period, the ancient scholar was complemented with both the sacred scribe and Christian scholarship, and the hound stood for a good preacher as much as a good sermon (Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 322; Couliano 74; Reuterswärd 60–63; Eisler 163, 166, 172). Hounds also symbolized prophecy. This notion, which may be traced back to the Egyptians (Reuterswärd 60), was immortalized in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* with the *Veltro*, the greyhound that would descend to earth from the Mercurial region of Gemini to establish a new Golden Age of Saturn (1.8–11; Olschki 44–46). Whether through its Saturnine and Mercurial connections, or through some other avenue, by the Renaissance the hound symbolized the melancholic, a meaning most memorably conveyed in Dürer’s *Melencolia I*.⁶ Given this meaning, Ranaldi’s decision to have *Socrates* represented as seated, reading a book, and propping up his head with his hand, could not have been fortuitous: he adopted the quintessential gesture of the *homo melancholicus* (Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 286–89).

As defined early on by Theophrastus (c. 371–287 BCE), there were two kinds of melancholics: one, produced by an inordinate amount of

cold black bile, was of a particularly odious nature; the other, produced by hot black bile, was conducive to genius (Couliano 46–52). According to Aristotle, “hot” melancholics were

all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts An example from heroic mythology is Heracles. . . . Among the heroes many others evidently suffered in the same way, and among men of recent times Empedocles, Plato, and *Socrates*, and numerous other well known men, and also most of the poets.

(qtd. in Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 18–19; emphasis added)

As the inventor of the sciences and patron of the arts, Hermes (Mercury) accordingly ruled the learned melancholic. By the 5th century CE, Martianus Capella presented Mercury as the spouse of Philology and attributed to this union the reason for Mercury’s control over all wisdom of benefit to mankind. During the medieval period, antique polarities were still maintained though naturally given a Christian interpretation. The “cold” melancholic had a disposition deemed perilously close to sloth, one of the seven deadly sins, and dubbed the “Devil’s bath” (Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 75–81; Brann 127–48). Conversely, the “hot” melancholic, overcome with desire to reach God, was thought to follow St. Paul in his quest for “*secundum Deum tristitia*,” sorrow according to God (2 Cor. 7.10 Vulgate; Couliano 51; Brann 130). This type of melancholic was capable of separating body and soul and of achieving a unity with God. Moreover, this type of melancholic was best suited to the hermetic art of alchemy. “Just as the furnace purifies corrupt gold,” explained the Greek monk St. Nilus of Ankyra (died c. 430 CE), “sorrow according to God purifies a contaminated heart” (qtd. in Brann 130). Further, according to the Arabic alchemist Geber (died 803 CE), if the alchemist’s soul did not transform into “spiritual gold,” then the transmutation of mercury and sulphur into gold would be rendered utterly impossible (qtd. in Brann 139).

With the fifteenth-century humanist Marsilio Ficino, melancholy was given a new interpretation that nevertheless depended in large part on ancient and medieval precedent. Like earlier authorities, he recognized that the “hot” melancholic alone was capable of separating body and soul and of achieving the Platonic divine *mania*, or fire of inspiration:

Of all scholars, those devoted to the study of philosophy are most bothered by black bile, because their minds get separated from their bodies and from bodily things. They become so preoccupied with incorporeal things, because their work is so much more difficult and the mind requires an even stronger will. To the extent that they join the mind to bodiless truth, they are forced to separate it from the body. Body for these people never returns except as a half-soul and a melancholy one.
 (The Book of Life 7) ⁷

Ficino made his greatest contribution to melancholy by drawing on antique notions of the relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm; he determined that what separated a melancholic “genius” from a “cold” melancholic was the placement of the planet Saturn in the cosmos at one’s birth. Saturn now joined, and in a sense displaced, Mercury as the ruler of the melancholic. Moreover, the planet was given prophetic powers in addition to inherently logical ones (Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 260 n 56). When badly aspected, Saturn acted malevolently and imposed on the child a dark constitution, but when well aspected, Saturn endowed the child with wisdom and holy understanding (Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 258–62; Tinkle 299–300). Whereas Mars or the Sun could provide a child with *imaginatio* (knowledge of both natural events and the mechanical arts) and Jupiter with *ratio* (knowledge of politics and science), only Saturn, in an essential league with Jupiter and Mercury, could provide the *mens contemplatrix*, the most exalted knowledge of theology and divinity (Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl 271–72; Schuster 94). Hence, the Vatican Library *Genius* and *Socrates* were united by the primacy of the planet Saturn, at once the progenitor and ruler of *Genius*’s *veltro* and source and overseer of *Socrates*’s wisdom. They also had a common basis in the birth of the individual: as Xenophon related, and as all humanists knew very well, “it had become notorious that Socrates claimed to be guided by ‘the deity’” (2–3). The “deity” had informed Socrates when his friends intended to enter into unfortunate or inauspicious enterprises, so that he might stop them, and being stronger than his bad “deity” had kept him from impiety and crime (Cicero 434–35). Socrates even ascribed his wisdom to his “deity,” a wisdom immortalized by written records of his particular dialectical method of “preaching.” Whether termed “the deity,” “divine something,” “divine sign,” “living spirit,” “dæmon,” “Guardian Angel,” or, indeed, “genius,” it is clear that the Vatican *Genius* controlled or infused *Socrates*,

much as Ficino's *mens contemplatrix* infused the most unhappy and happiest of men, the melancholic genius.

But this is not all. Socrates also had much in common with Christ. In fact, of all the pagan "types" of Christ, Socrates was the most renowned and the most profoundly considered during the Renaissance. Of the numerous comparisons made between Socrates and Christ, three were particularly pervasive: each had lived a morally exemplary life; each had died a martyr; and each had had direct experience of the Godhead (Heller 139–45; Lavin 66–75). Rather than hold the fateful glass of hemlock as one might have expected, given the chalice that figures so prominently in Christ's Crucifixion, *Socrates* was represented on the Vatican Library façade literally and metaphorically with his "deity," for it was through his "deity" that the morally upright and contemplative Socrates was granted immortality. Much as St. Paul experienced a mystical death when he was rapt to the third heaven, to "bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in [his] body" (Gal. 6.17 Vulgate), and as St. Francis was granted ecstatic rapture on Mt. Alverna to bear the *stigmata* on his body, so Socrates was depicted on the Vatican Library façade following St. Bonaventure's "itinerary of the mind into God" (38–49, 105): he was in a state of ecstatic contemplation, with his soul swallowed up into God (French and Cunningham 209–12; Screech 164–65).

Having shed some light on the connection between *Socrates* and his *Genius*, we may now return to the magic squares. First, *Arithmetic* is related to the *Genius*, given that both were once located on the uppermost storey of the façade as part of the quorum of personifications of philosophy and, more importantly, given their attributes of God's "invisible things," the Saturnine magic square and the circle. They may also be compared on the basis of *Genius*'s role as the propagator of divine wisdom; the role of arithmetic and geometry in discerning the "intelligibles" of Franciscan (and indeed Pauline and Pseudo-Dionysian) mysticism; and the traditional meaning of Saturn's "good" square as a vehicle by which holy understanding may be disseminated to humanity, in a manner not unlike the Holy Ghost on Pentecost, or the *infusoria* of the cabalistic *sephiroth*. In addition, *Arithmetic* is like the *Genius* in that both are harbingers of a kind of ecstatic, mystical sadness, the kind that enables a devout Christian to experience *secundum Deum tristitia* and unite, through a mystical death, with God. Hence, the notion of death—or martyrdom—which is inherent in *Arithmetic*'s magic square of lead, as in the melancholic life of *Socrates*, is an essential complement to the mystical ecstasy of the believer's quest (Screech 139, 194). That there is

a specifically alchemical analogue to such happy sadness is underlined in both versions of *Pythagoras's* Jovean square furnished by Fontana in 1590 and 1604, although the alchemical mercury of the first rendition makes it clear that the magic square belongs to Jupiter-Mercury- $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ (not just to Jupiter- $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$), hence evoking Hermes $\tau\rho\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$, the ancient sage and father of the *hermetica*, who was celebrated in Sixtine Rome (Mandel, "Simbolismo" 61–92) as in Cesare Baronio's 1588–1607 *Annales ecclesiastici* (Grafton 148). With an alchemical reading so indicated, *Arithmetic* with her Saturnine square and the *Genius* with his hounds become symbolic of the first stage in the process, the *nigredo*—death or martyrdom of the body. They also become symbolic of the final transmutation, since the union of the soul with God is within their jurisdiction.

Much as *Genius* and *Arithmetic* may be read dialectically—like the alchemical process, the Socratic method of argumentation, and, as I shall explain shortly, Sixtus V himself—so the particulars in each instance lend themselves to such a duality.⁸ The hounds of *Genius*, as traditional signifiers of the alchemical sulphur, symbolize the beginning of the process of which the encompassing circle is the end (Hartlaub 300). The lead of *Arithmetic's* Saturnine tablet is both a traditional analogue to the alchemical sulphur and the highest possible level to which one may aspire, the *mens contemplatrix*, or Philosopher's Stone (Ficino, *De Vita* 93^v). Finally, the quicksilver of the 1590 edition is the beginning of the work, the female, lunar, mercury that must battle and die with the male, solarian, sulphur so that the soul may be purged of sin and resurrected; and quicksilver is the end of the work, the luminous, $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ -like Philosopher's Stone or Philosophical Mercury. In this regard, the crowning presence of $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ in both versions of the tablet surely indicates that the penultimate stage of Jovean whiteness, or *albedo*, has been (or is in the process of being) metamorphosed into the red, martyr-like, or purple Philosopher's Stone, much as *Socrates* was shown in union with the godhead (Picinelli 737). In keeping with the first rule of the alchemists, as written by Hermes Trismegistos in the *Tabula Smaragdina*, "That which is below is like to that which is above, and that which is above is like to that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing" (qtd. in De Jong 59). Whereas the 1604 sigil for stannum actually encapsulates—and clarifies—such a reading, since it symbolizes both human/Jovean and divine/Saturnian knowledge, I suggest that the quicksilver of the 1590 version was more likely the sigil once found on the Vatican Library façade. My basic reason is as follows: the alchemical mercury puts into relief the utterly essential role also played by Mercury in the realization

of the Ficinian *mens contemplatrix*; without Mercury, Jupiter and Saturn cannot properly transport the soul of the mystic to a union with God. Furthermore, the goal of the hermeticist or philosopher is not to simplify the message—precisely the result of replacing the quicksilver of 1590 with the stannum of 1604—but rather to speak in tongues, as it were, so that only the adept may understand and ultimately gain knowledge of the divine. In unison with the fiery Sagittarius and the aerial Jupiter, the watery (astrological) Mercury all but completes the elements required to begin the alchemical process. According to the reading offered here, these elements find completion with $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ as ruler of the *ratio*, the earthly domain of Jupiter (De Jong 120–21), and with the thirty-four cells of the magic square that point to Jovean divinity and the source of nature. In keeping with the first rule of the alchemists, “as below, so above,” the elements of fire, air, and water are contained in Saturn’s leaden square by its very nature, as is the final, inherently saturnine, melancholic element of earth.

The personification of *Logic*, once located to the right of the eighth window, is described by Fontana only insofar as her gender is enunciated, and she is said to have held a veil with which she was covering the accompanying lion (see Fig. 12). *Zeno* (whether Zeno of Elea, c. 495–430 BCE; or Zeno of Kitium, c. 333–262 BCE) was depicted beneath *Logic*. He held both hands high, with one closed and the other open, and stood on a socle with the form of a scorpion (see Fig. 13). In one of two uncharacteristic passages in the entire discussion of the Vatican Library façades (that concerning the magic squares is the other), Fontana actually provides an interpretation of a component part of the program: *Logic*’s lion, who held a branch in his paw above three mountains, symbolized the patron, Pope Sixtus V ([1978] 95’).⁹

Logic, or dialectic, had its origins in ancient Greece with Plato and Aristotle. For Plato, the model dialectician had been Socrates; for Aristotle, Zeno of Elea, the same Zeno with whom the youthful Socrates is purported to have been in contact in Plato’s *Parmenides* (198–331). On this basis, one might conclude that the *Zeno* represented beneath *Logic* was the more ancient “inventor” of dialectic, especially given his connection to *Socrates*, represented a mere bay away.¹⁰ Yet, *Zeno*’s gestures, with one hand closed and one open, were the gestures for which Zeno of Kitium was renowned. As Cicero related in *Academica*,

But you deny that anybody except the wise man knows anything; and this Zeno used to demonstrate by gesture: for he would display his

hand in front of someone with the fingers stretched out and say, 'A visual appearance is like this' . . . then he pressed his fingers closely together and made a fist, and said that that was comprehension.

(qtd. in Zanker 90-97)

Hence, *Logic's* historical exemplar was Zeno of Kitium, Socrates's spiritual heir (Zanker 173).¹¹

By the time of Martianus Capella, dialectic or logic was presented alongside grammar and rhetoric as constituting the *trivium*, and the emphasis was placed on practical dialectic as a form of disputation. This part of the *trivium* continued to play an important role in treatments of the liberal arts until the twelfth century—the century of Peter Lombard—when it eclipsed grammar as the foundation of all philosophy (Abelson; McKeon 166-67; Kristeller 120-22; Wagner 1-31; Stump 125-46). Logic enjoyed such supreme importance until the Renaissance, at which time rhetoric and philology displaced logic and her cohort metaphysics (Stinger 474). During the twelfth century, logic was also given a new attribute, to replace the serpent given to her by Martianus Capella: in his *Anticlaudianus*, Alanus de Insulis pictured a scorpion encircling Logic's left hand, with its tail poised to sting (91-92). On the Vatican Library façade the scorpion of *Logic* was given to the base or socle supporting her illustrious exemplar *Zeno*, below. *Logic* therefore controlled or, better, worked in unison with *Zeno*, as *Arithmetic* worked with *Pythagoras* and *Genius* with *Socrates*. In turn, *Zeno's* famous gestures, with one hand closed and one open, underlined the dialectical method that apparently informed Ranaldi's program for the long façade of the Vatican Library: his open hand of "visual appearance" surely corresponded to the "sensibles" of God's natural world, created "in measure, and number, and weight," while his closed hand of "comprehension" corresponded to the "intelligibles," the divine ideas of God.

Although the Sixtine personification of *Logic* was unique,¹² her departure from tradition is illuminating. First, any contemporaneous viewer allowed access to the façade would have effortlessly recognized in *Logic's* lion, *monti*, and pear branch an allusion to Pope Sixtus V, without having to resort to Fontana's text. Secondly, *Logic* was covering the Sixtine lion with a veil, not, emphatically, uncovering him, in a manner probably somewhat more graceful than but nevertheless akin to that of the *Egyptian Hercules*, who virtually squashes the head of his—and Sixtus V's—lion under the veil on the third pier of the Salone Sistino (see Fig. 14).¹³ Such a gesture could have suggested essentially two things: first,

that the Sixtine lion was more logical than *Logic* herself, since personifications of logic were often represented wearing a veil; and second, that the lion symbolized veiled mysteries, for whereas truth is unveiled in Renaissance tradition, mysteries are veiled so that the profane not be allowed access to natural philosophy (Ripa 2: 21; Wind 11–14). As the Pseudo-Dionysius and his Franciscan followers explained, “It is not possible for the divine ray to illuminate us except veiled mysteriously in variegated sacred veils” (qtd. in French and Cunningham 212–13). At the same time, as represented on the Vatican Library façade, the supremely logical and “mysterious” Sixtine lion was actually revealed for a moment because *Logic* was in the act of veiling, hence allowing part of the lion to be seen and part of the “truth” to be revealed. To quote the second-century CE author Lucius Apuleius, *Logic* seems to have been telling the viewer, “Behold, I have conveyed to you what you must not know although you have heard it” (qtd. in Wind 11; compare with 2 Cor. 12.1–4). In other words, the partial unveiling conveyed the truth known only to the chosen few, to the philosopher whose soul was in communion with the Godhead, like St. Paul when rapt to the “third heaven” and St. Francis on Mt. Alverna. To have chosen *Logic* as the vehicle by which the lion was at once shown and not shown, by which the sacred mysteries were at once conveyed and hidden, served to underline the natural or hermetic philosophy on which the Vatican Library program was fundamentally based, for it was through dialectic that the Platonic, and Socratic, philosopher was able to purge his soul of error, embrace death, and “rage correctly” (Wind 3); to contemplate the natural world (*Zeno*’s open hand of “visual appearance”) and unite with the “genius” to learn the secrets of the universe (*Zeno*’s closed hand of “comprehension”). It was through dialectic that the philosopher attained *ratio* and ultimately entered into union with God, to be given the *mens contemplatrix*, thanks to the good graces of Saturn, Jupiter, and Mercury. And it was through dialectic that the Franciscan scholastic approached philosophy and the metaphysics of theology, embarking on a Bonaventurian “itinerary of the mind into God” in emulation of the nature-loving St. Francis and his momentous “uplifting . . . in contemplation” on Mt. Alverna (Bonaventure 30–31).

It was surely on account of Sixtus V as master Platonic-Franciscan dialectician that the magic squares once graced the Vatican Library façade, particularly given the central location shared by *Plato* and the *Master of the Sentences*. It was surely on this basis, too, that the renowned group of inventors depicted inside the library, in the Salone Sistine,

include not only the *Egyptian Hercules* but also the *Egyptian Mercury-Thoyt-Hermes Trismegistos* and the $\Theta\text{EO}\Sigma$ -like *Pythagoras*, all predecessors of the supreme pontiff who commissioned the work, and all extremely useful foils for the *virii illustres* adorning the façade. That the *Egyptian Mercury* is represented in the Salone Sistino with the severed head of Argus, caduceus, obelisk inscribed with hieroglyphs, and lion's head (see Fig. 15) underlines his assimilation to Jupiter-Mercury- $\Theta\text{EO}\Sigma$ on the magic square of 1590: the eyes of the slain Argus were given to Juno's peacock, and the *cauda pavonis*, or peacock's tail, along with the caduceus, the lion, and the obelisk, all symbolize the final transformation of the Jupiterian *albedo* or whiteness into the Solarian and Mercurial *rubedo* or redness of the Philosopher's Stone (Rocca 100; Ficino, *De Vita* 97^r; Via 15). *Pythagoras* held the Jovean and Mercurial square on the Vatican Library façade, as he is a silent Mercurial sage in the Salone Sistino, with finger to mouth (compare with Figs. 16 and 17), and as he invented the letter Y, the hieroglyph of the exemplary human life (Rocca 127–28; Pansa 290; Valeriano 441; Bocchio cxxxix; Bongo 37^r; Chastel 147–59; Hess, "Some Notes" 1: 172).¹⁴ *Pythagoras*'s possession of the four-fold square also suggests the state in which all *uomini famosi* of the Vatican Library façade seem to have been represented: the metamorphosis from *ratio*, the knowledge of politics and science bestowed by Jupiter, to *mens contemplatrix*, the stage ruled by Saturn, Jupiter, and Mercury and overseen by *Arithmetic*, *Genius*, and *Logic*, as by all remaining personifications on the *secondo piano* of the façade. By virtue of being represented hieroglyphically—or "mysteriously"—as the lion, rather than as part of the quorum of illustrious individuals, Sixtus V seems to have shown the viewer attuned to ancient Egyptian and cabalistic wisdom that he was the only mortal who was manifestly master of the *mens contemplatrix*, for only Sixtus V merited representation on the uppermost storey of the façade in the company of personifications of philosophy and, to be sure, as the very embodiment of *Logic*, the most hermetically efficacious of them all. Not at all unlike Mercury, this vicar of Christ apparently controlled all wisdom of benefit to humanity.

If, to quote Hermes Trismegistos, the *uomini famosi* on the façade once "[rose] from earth to heaven," thanks to the beneficence of Saturn, Jupiter, and Mercury, and then "descend[ed] again from heaven to earth, and receive[d] the force from things that are above and from things that are below" (qtd. in De Jong 59), then Sixtus V was being granted mystical martyrdom, or *secundum Deum melancholia*. As a pious Franciscan and vicar of Christ, Sixtus V was joining, in St. Bonaventure's words,

“those who . . . are raised into ecstasy, [and] are sometimes raised up further, as far as rapture” (qtd. in Screech 183). As I shall now explain by considering the lion and scorpion of *Logic* and *Zeno*, the many and varied facets of the Vatican Library façade program seem ultimately to have been united under a dominion shared by Saturn and Jupiter-Mercury-ΘΕΟΣ, the ancient gods who figured above all others in the birth and pontificate of Sixtus V.

Disparate though they may at first appear, *Logic*’s Sixtine lion and *Zeno*’s scorpion have a common basis when read according to the ancient and specifically Platonic mysteries, for the lion and the scorpion were ancient symbols of the earth (Valeriano 14–15, 195). Although the actual representation of the scorpion does not appear in other Sixtine ensembles, the lion is ubiquitous and may be used to demonstrate such a Platonic significance. The Sixtine lion accompanies *Mother Earth* on a window embrasure of the northern wall of the Salone Sistino, clearly due to his earthly character (see Fig. 18). In like manner, earth is the only element absent from the triad of personifications of *Fire*, *Air*, and *Water* on the first landing of the grand staircase of the Lateran Palace, since embodied by the pope (Rocca 194–95; Pistolesi 3: 222 n 1). Not surprisingly, the lion and scorpion, as symbols of the earth like the hounds of *Genius*, are intimately related to the melancholic, who also has an earthly disposition (Ficino, *De Vita* 4^v). When recalling that the melancholic was destined from birth to be ruled by Saturn, and that *Genius* tempered and ruled both the birth star of the individual and the Saturnine and Mercurial natures of the prophetic *Veltrio*, then the lion and scorpion of *Logic* and *Zeno* logically evoke the natal chart of Sixtus V.

As it happens, Sixtus V was born following a dream in which his parents were promised a “wonder child” and future pope (Mandel, “Starry Leo” 18–23). At birth, his Ascendant—the exact point of intersection between the eastern horizon of the birthplace and the zodiacal band—was in Capricorn (♐ or ♑), the zodiacal sign dominated by Saturn (see Fig. 19). The birth of the “melancholic” Sixtus V was accordingly ruled by Saturn. The Sun (☉) was located within ten degrees of both Jupiter (♃) and the Ascendant in the sign of Capricorn, that is to say, the Sun was conjunct Jupiter and the Ascendant, and it was extremely well placed, so much so that the lion was consistently used in Sixtine art and literature to symbolize the “divine fire” of the pope’s natal chart. His Mid-Heaven—the exact point of intersection between the meridian and the zodiacal band—was in Scorpio (♏), an exceedingly beneficial placement that was dependent upon Saturn, much as *Pythagoras* was dependent upon

Arithmetic, *Socrates* upon *Genius*, and *Zeno* upon *Logic*; in tandem with the extra-zodiacal constellation Arcturus, which was conjunct the Mid-Heaven, the scorpion indicated his future vicarship.

The lion and scorpion of *Logic* and *Zeno* seem to have signalled the election to the papacy of Sixtus V, in addition to his birth (Mandel, "Starry Leo" 18–23). The *Veltrio's* origin in the zodiacal Gemini is key in this regard. The twins of Gemini are overseen by Mercury, ancient ruler of the melancholic and patron god of Wednesday, Sixtus V's lucky day. Not only was Sixtus V elected to the See of Peter on Mercury's day, but his electoral Ascendant was also in the zodiacal sign of Gemini (♊; see Fig. 20). Mercury was therefore ruler of Sixtus V's electoral chart and formed a fitting complement, in terms of the melancholic philosopher, to Saturn as ruler of his natal chart. Since the zodiacal sign of Leo was as much a symbol of Sixtus V's natal Sun in Capricorn as of his electoral Sun in Taurus (♉), as an analysis of the Sixtine *impresa* reveals (Mandel, "Starry Leo" 24); since his electoral Sun was also in a beneficial conjunction with Jupiter; and since Scorpio was located in the "melancholic" sixth house of the electoral chart, the house of sadness and physical illness (in this sense, of too much black bile), then *Logic* and *Zeno* were united by the Saturnine and Mercurial rulers, as by the Sun and Jupiter of Sixtus V's astrological charts. Like so much of the visual panegyric of Sixtine Rome, the Vatican Library façade seems once to have celebrated the birth of the *Veltrio* and the Golden Age of Christianity heralded by his coming. Its magic squares promised the mystical union of the "melancholic" Franciscan pope with his maker, and the transmutation of his Church Militant to the Church Triumphant.

NOTES

I wish to thank *EIRC's* anonymous readers for their constructive criticism and suggestions; Steven Ostrow and John Paoletti for reading an earlier draft of this article and offering valuable advice; and Angela Böck, W. Chandler Kirwin, Juliusz Chroscicki, Phil Dean, and Burcht Pranger for their kind assistance with source material. Janette Bewley created the line drawings of the figures once decorating the façade on my behalf. This study was completed under the auspices of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

¹ In 1938, Hess indicated that the cycle was "whitewashed . . . under Urban VIII [Maffeo Barberini, 1623–44], when in 1634 was installed the *Armeria*" ("Some Notes" 1: 167). However, in his 1725 guidebook to "the most memorable things in Rome,"

Pinaroli relates that the façade in question was painted with “molte imagini di scienze, e di virtù, ed alcune altre cose, che appartengono all’esercizio de libri, come si può osservare da chi viene in Roma” (many images of science and of virtue, and of some other things that pertain to the use of books, *as one may observe there on coming to Rome*) (76; emphasis added). Compare with Chattard’s 1767 *Nuova descrizione del Vaticano*, in which one learns that the façade was painted “a chiaroscuro, con figure, Putti, Festoni, Leoni, e Monti allusivi alle gentilizie di lui [Sixtus V’s] Armi” (*a chiaroscuro with figures, putti, festoons, lions and mountains allusive of his [Sixtus V’s] arms*) (3: 39).

² Likely due to the hermetic nature of obtaining knowledge of the divine, whether through the cabala and related white magic, alchemy, astrology, or Christian mysticism in general, no explanatory text penned during Sixtus V’s pontificate exists to confirm absolutely the influence of the occult doctrine. The evidence resides primarily in the imagery, such as that presented below, and in the centuries-old traditions that inform it.

³ I should like to thank *EIRC*’s anonymous reviewer for suggesting this interpretation of Fontana’s “misteriose pitture.”

⁴ According to the order given in Fontana (1978) 94^r–96^v, and Fontana (1604) 83^v–85^v, the following figures once adorned the façade: *Good Leisure* above *Scipio*; *Honour* above *Julius Caesar*; *History* above *Titus Livy*; *Rhetoric* above *Marcus Tullius Cicero*; *Geometry* above *Euclid*; *Arithmetic* above *Pythagoras*; *Politics* above *Emperor Justinian*; *Physics* above *Aristotle*; *Ethics* above *Plato*; *Theology* above the *Master of the Sentences*; *Astrology* above *Ptolemy*; *Economics* above *Xenophon*; *Music* above *Boethius*; *Poetry* above *Virgil*; *Grammar* above *Donatus*; *Logic* above *Zeno*; *Immortality* above *Hercules*; and *Genius* above *Socrates*.

⁵ Curiously, Gettings 409 identifies this sigil as the *Sulphur Vivum* of the alchemists—the exact opposite to the *Argentum Vivum*, or mercury.

⁶ Recently, Roob 203 identified Dürer’s dog as a lamb. I cannot concur with this identification on visual grounds.

⁷ Ficino, *De Vita* 5^v:

Maximè uero litterarum omnium hi atra bile premuntur, qui sedulo philosophiae studio dediti, mentem à corpore, rebusq. corporeis seuocant incorporeisq. coniungunt: tum quia difficilis admodum opus maiori quoque indiget mentis intentione: tum quia quatenus mentem incorporeae ueritati coniungunt, eatenus à corpore disiungere compelluntur. Hinc corpus eorum nonnunquam, quasi semianimum redditur atque melancholicum.

⁸ Sohm 13–32 uses such a “coincidorum oppositorum” in his analysis of Dürer’s engraving and explains that such a method agrees with that employed in Renaissance philosophy (particularly Nicholas of Cusa’s) and literature. Yet he discounts an alchemical reading.

⁹ “Al lato destro dell’ottava finestra è figurata la Logica in forma d’una donna, al fianco della quale sta un Leone, che tiene una branca sopra tre monti, & ella con un uelo mostra di coprirlo, & con il Leone, & Monti s’allude all’arme di sua Beatitudine.”

¹⁰ There was also a well-known precedent for such a pairing in Andrea di Bonaiuto's fresco cycle of c. 1365–67 in the Spanish Chapel at S. Maria Novella, Florence; see Aurigemma Fig. 26.

¹¹ Ranaldi, qtd. in Frajese 128, thought about Zeno of Kitium when jotting down notes for the program early on.

¹² Contrast personifications of logic listed in Ripa 2: 20–21.

¹³ I follow the order in Pansa 249–318, which begins with *Adam* on the first pier and proceeds through the *Egyptian Mercury*, *Egyptian Hercules*, *Memnon*, and the *Egyptian Queen Isis* on the third, and beyond. This order differs from that in Thiel 105–31.

¹⁴ In Michael Maier, *Symbola Aurea Mensa duodecim nationum* (1617), the alchemical hermaphrodite holds the Upsilon (see Biedermann, *Materia Prima* 96–97). Compare with von Stoltzenberg Fig. 21.

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