



Opening to God: The Cosmographical Diagrams of Opicinus de Canistris

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Opening to God: the Cosmographical Diagrams of Opicinus de Canistris

Some of the greatest mystics of the Middle Ages, Hugh of St Victor, Hildegard of Bingen, Joachim of Fiore, sought to express their mystical experience of God both in words and images.¹ The cognitive difficulties of comprehending spiritual matters is expressed in Joachim's succinct formulation: »we see in enigmas, as through a mirror«, hence his use of figural images as an integral component of his spiritual writings.² In the minds of the mystics imagery could be simultaneously informational, pedagogic and meditative in function, and the pictures could be pondered again and again to reveal their meaning over time. For instance, when faced with a difficult scriptural passage, Hugh of St Victor would elucidate the meaning by drawing diagrams.³ Several centuries later, between ca. 1330 and 1350, a little known visionary and mystic named Opicinus de Canistris also decided to use visual and literary means to explore his ideas about the cosmos, his self-knowledge and knowledge of God, in a series of intricate cosmographical diagrams based on the late medieval portolan charts of the Mediterranean. We know also

that he added textual or visual details to the drawings over time as a result of contemplating the images.⁴

Richard Salomon's invaluable studies of the Palatinus and Vaticanus manuscripts by Opicinus communicate a strong sense of disappointment about Opicinus's »failure« as a mystic: he argued that Opicinus did not seem to experience the feelings of joyous union and peace of God considered »normative« for mystics by some scholars.⁵ Evans was rather more charitable to Opicinus than Salomon, declaring these diagrams to be records of his mystical visions.⁶ Of course, as recent studies indicate, reaching a consensus on an appropriate definition of terms such as »mysticism« is extraordinarily difficult.⁷ There can be little doubt that Opicinus had an artistic, intuitive, mystical side, which he used to penetrate to the heart of divine truth. The evidence of both word and image in these manuscripts shows us a mind at times trapped and thwarted by intellectual understanding until it experienced a moment of illumination, crystallized in the images »given« to its inner eye

I am grateful for the assistance of Michele Mulchahey in translating the Latin passages.

1 For Hugh of St-Victor's use of the ark of Noah, see Patrice Sicard: *Diagrammes Médiévaux et Exégèse Visuelle. Le Libellus de Formatione Arche de Hugues de Saint-Victor*, Turnhout 1993. See Adelgundis Führkötter, trans. N.N. Huyghebaert: *Les miniatures du Scivias*, Turnhout 1977, for Hildegard, and Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich: *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore*, Oxford 1972, for the imagery used by Joachim and his followers.

2 Reeves and Hirsch-Reich (note 1), 20: »Videmus per speculum in enigmatem...«, based on 1 Corinthians 13:12.

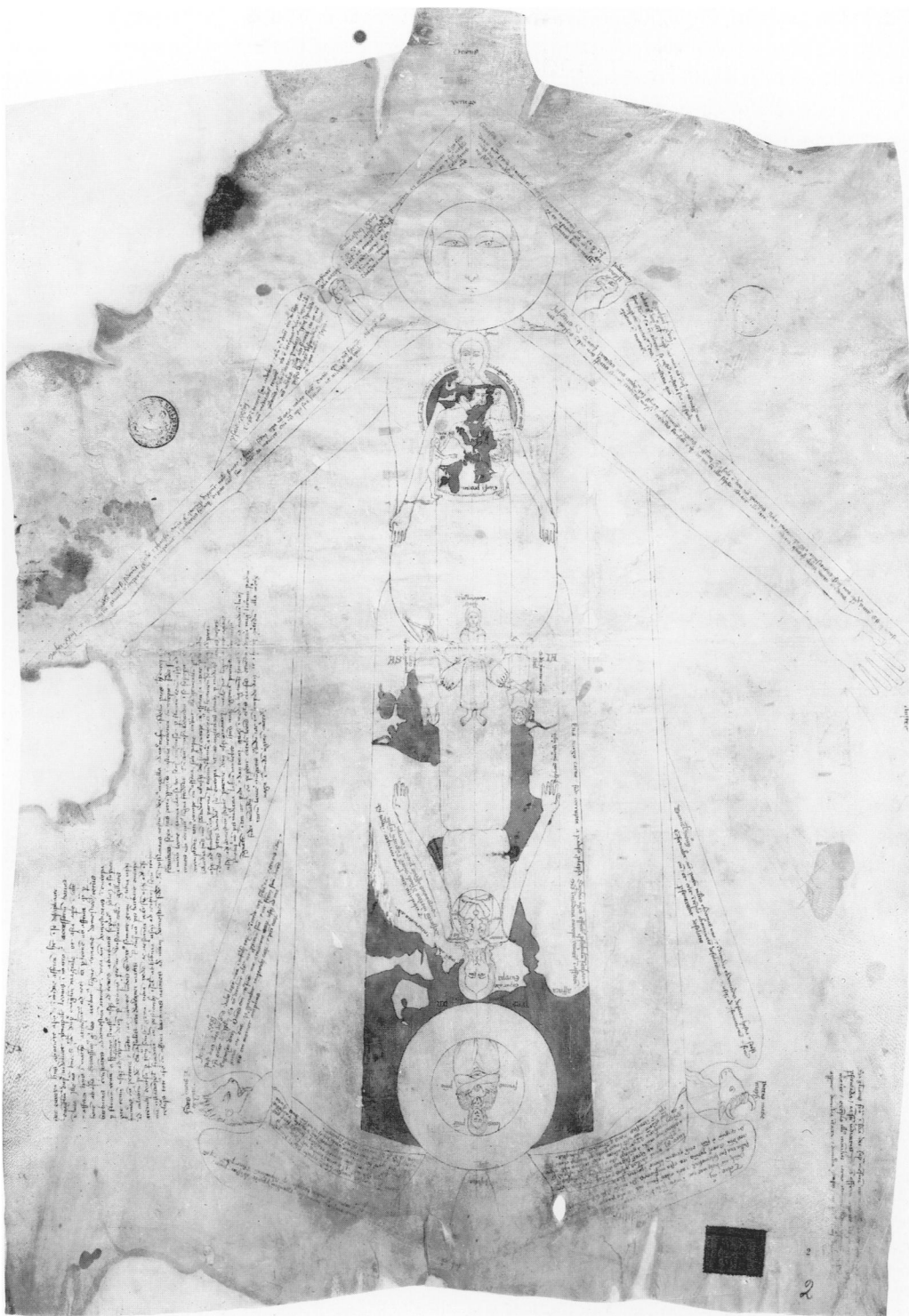
3 Beryl Smalley: *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., Oxford 1983, 96.

4 For instance, on f. 74v of *Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana*, Rome, Ms. Vat. lat. 6435, he added a detail of a rabbit to help explicate a particular etymological point, one year after the initial fabrication of the drawing.

5 For the *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Rome, Ms. Pal. lat. 1993, see Richard Salomon: *Opicinus de Canistris. Weltbild und Bekenntnisse eines avignonischen Klerikers des 14. Jahrhunderts*, London 1936. The *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Rome, Ms. Vat. Lat. 6435, is discussed by Richard Salomon: *A Newly Discovered Manuscript of Opicinus de Canistris*, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVI, 1953, 45–57, and idem: *Aftermath to Opicinus de Canistris*, in: *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XXV, 1962, 137 to 41.

6 Michael Evans: *The Geometry of the Mind*, in: *Architectural Association Quarterly* XII, 1980, 47.

7 John Hirsh: *Religious Attitudes and Mystical Language in Medieval Literary Texts: An Essay in Methodology*, in: *Vox Mystica: Essays on Medieval Mysticism*, ed. Anne Clark Bartlett, Woodbridge 1995, 15–26.



1. Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 1993, f. 2r: Diagram of Adam (*Primus Homo*); Faithful Man (*Homo Fidelis*) and the Church of the Sacraments (*Ecclesia Sacramentalis*)

and sense of judgement; my article seeks to counter the overly negative view of Opicinus's mysticism.

This article argues that the diagrams of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome, Ms. Vat. lat. 6435 (henceforward: Vaticanus manuscript), executed by Opicinus between 1337 and 1341, were a unique means for him to open to God, as he struggled to comprehend the meaning of God's universe and his place within that scheme. The earlier work by Opicinus contained in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome, Ms. Pal. lat. 1993 (henceforward: Palatinus manuscript) is only briefly considered here in relation to the Vaticanus; the development of cosmographical ideas in both manuscripts and their interrelationship awaits fuller treatment.⁸

We may witness, both in the drawings and in his writings, how he tried to accomplish an exhaustive analysis of the shades and grades of evidence, opinion, knowledge of his whole moral life as reflecting the microcosm within the macrocosm. Like many other mystics, Opicinus was concerned to renounce the objects of sensory experience, subjecting himself and the outside world to a process of rigorous scrutiny and continuous cleansing of the »windows of the soul«, so that the light of spiritual reality would transform his understanding.⁹ To this end, I have prepared a handlist of the manifold ideas that he explores in the cosmographical diagrams of the Vaticanus. I have also analyzed the mechanical process involved in drawing the diagrams to underscore the richness and mutability of his system of representation, as well as to demonstrate how it assisted him in the process of self-reflection and analysis. This aspect of his work has not been previously studied.

In the final part of the article, in relation to a drawing integrating ideas about the creation of the

universe to the *mappamundi*, it will be demonstrated that Opicinus attempted to find a higher, spiritualized value for many of the more mundane, literal phenomena that he experienced in the world, as he related this information to his sense of the *minor mundus* or microcosm of the human body and the geography of the inhabited world.¹⁰ The end result of the process undertaken by Opicinus was that even the most insignificant aspect of the universe seemed to proclaim God's design and plan for salvation.

An unusual feature of these diagrams, which has not received the attention it deserves, is the role ascribed by Opicinus to his conscience in the process of constructing and analysing his knowledge. He speaks repeatedly of consulting his conscience so that he might better understand God's will as he contemplated the inevitability of the Day of Judgement. In the later Middle Ages, conscience was seen by some minds to require a rigorous process of self-examination and self-knowledge. According to St Bonaventura (d. 1274), conscience was a disposition that helped to perfect understanding, for it directed people to perform some deeds but not others. On a practical level, a person might ask the question, before acting, »What ought I to do?« and then, »Did I do the right thing?«¹¹ The result was that it became imperative to examine one's conscience in minute detail on a regular basis, both for saints and more ordinary mortals.¹² Although he only reached the level of *beatus*, the devout Peter of Luxembourg (1369 – 1387) felt compelled to confess at least three times a week, often purging himself of the most trifling offenses according to the dictates of his conscience.¹³ This same exceptionally sensitive conscience is evident in the life of Opicinus, who was a near contemporary of Peter's. However,

⁸ Salomon 1936 (note 5), 130–33; see also Jörg-Geerd Arentzen: *Imago Mundi Cartographica*, Munich 1984, 275–319, for a more recent analysis of the moralized geography of the Palatinus.

⁹ Fredeick Happold: *Mysticism*, Harmondsworth 1970, 58.

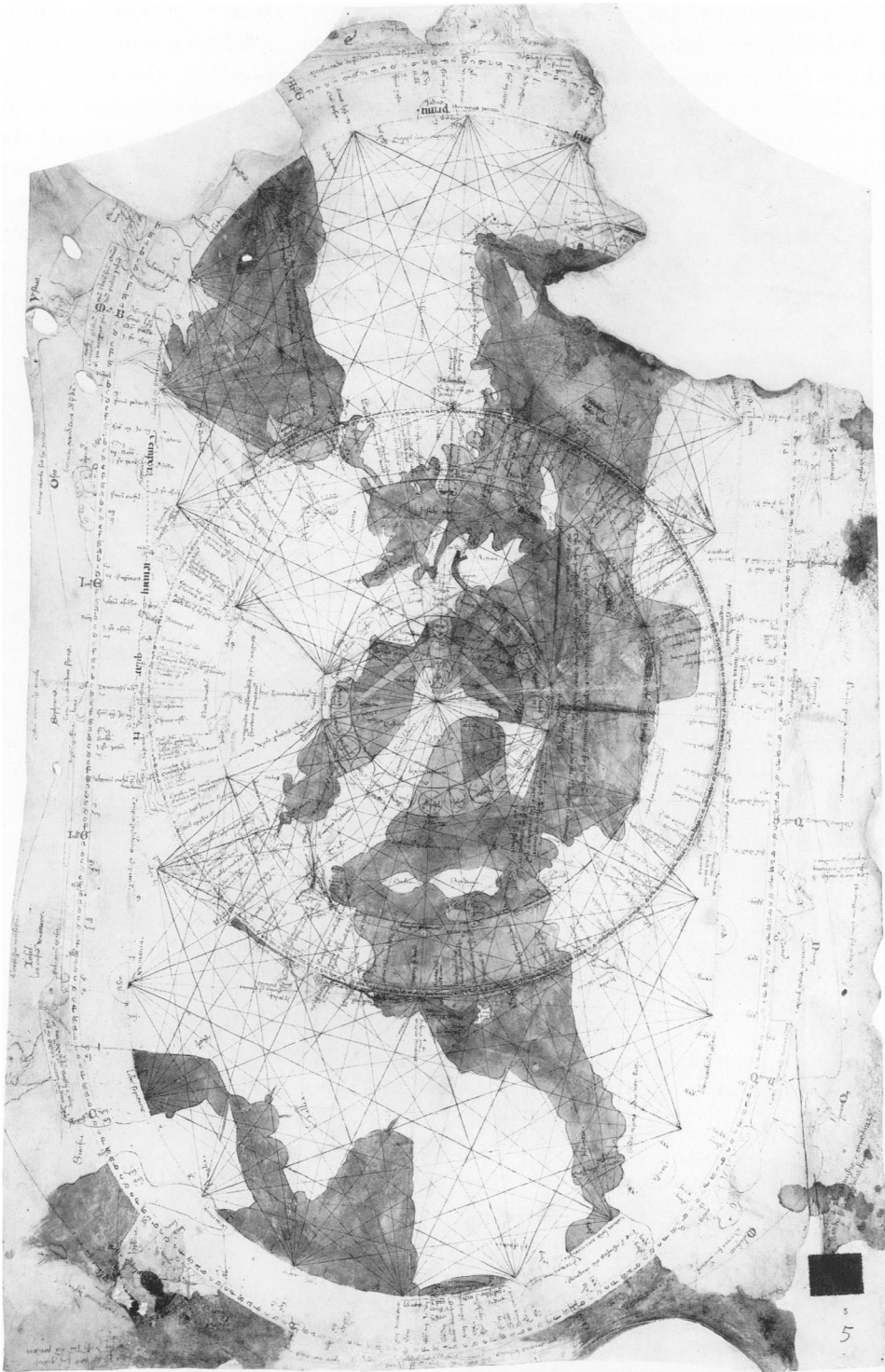
¹⁰ Rudolf Allers: *Microcosmus*, in: *Tradition II*, 1944, 321, and George Conger: *Theories of Macrocosms and*

Microcosms in the History of Philosophy, New York, 1967, 29–52.

¹¹ Timothy Potts: Conscience, in: *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann et al., Cambridge 1982, 696.

¹² Thomas Tentler: *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, Princeton 1977, 134–62.

¹³ Richard Kieckhefer: *Unquiet Souls*, Chicago 1984, 125–27.



2. Pal. lat. 1993, f. 5r: Diagram of the Corporeal Church (*Ecclesia Corporalis*) and Lamentations About its State

Opicinus has been assessed by modern scholarship in overwhelmingly negative, one might even say, pathological terms. He has been described as a failed mystic, as »psychotic«, an alienated individual in the social realm, filled with obsessive thoughts about his self and his body.¹⁴ It has been said of his images that they are »all about body and not mind«, but this view cannot be supported based on the analysis of the Vaticanus manuscript presented here.¹⁵ Opicinus was convinced that the images were moments of truth revealed to him for the perfection of his soul, in order that he might shed *scientia naturalis* (knowledge of facts), in preference to higher truth or *maior scientia*. He claims that his spiritual »renovation« in Christ occurred in 1337.¹⁶

Opicinus was a minor cleric from Pavia who worked as *scriptor* in the office of the Apostolic Penitentiary at Avignon until 1350.¹⁷ He was thus immersed on a regular basis in the work of administering special cases involving the sacrament of penance under the direction of Vatican officials.¹⁸ In the autobiographical notes accompanying his drawing (Palatinus, f. 11r), he tells us that on August 24, 1330, he completed a *breve confessionale de peccatis meis*.¹⁹ Several years later, in 1334 and 1335, he produced an initial set of ten drawings. Writing

later about the process, he explains that these were done following his conscience. He describes the process accordingly: »... Therefore, beginning to be born in the thirteenth hundredth and thirty-fourth year of the Lord, I again renewed the diagram of the hierarchy, on which I corrected a little the explanation of the book, both concerning it [i.e. the hierarchy] and concerning the meanings of the gospels, and partly from my conscience, which until then had been very rough, and possessed of only a modicum of clarity right up until the year of expectation [= 1335 in his system of reckoning]. I composed the second book of the aforesaid explanation, on ten pieces of paper, my interior eyes being opened a little towards discerning the images of the earth and the sea to considering them in my conscience...«²⁰

Between February 1335 and June 1336, he produced the manuscript of the Palatinus: fifty-two images on twenty-seven skins of parchment, which generally retain their natural outline, all done in consultation with his conscience. To his mind, the drawings were unlike any other that might be found, for they had been done with the aid of his »interior eye«, filled with images and testimonial writings about the truth as it had been revealed to him.²¹

14 Ernst Kris: *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, New York 1952, 118–27; Gerhard Ladner: *Homo Viator. Medieval Ideas on Alienation and Order*, in: *Images and Ideas in the Middle Ages. Selected Studies in History and Art*, Rome 1983, 937–74.

15 Michael Camille: *The Image and the Self: Unwriting Late Medieval Bodies*, in: *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin, Manchester 1994, 94.

16 Salomon 1936 (note 5), 214, and Salomon 1952 (note 6), 50.

17 Salomon 1936 (note 5), 26.

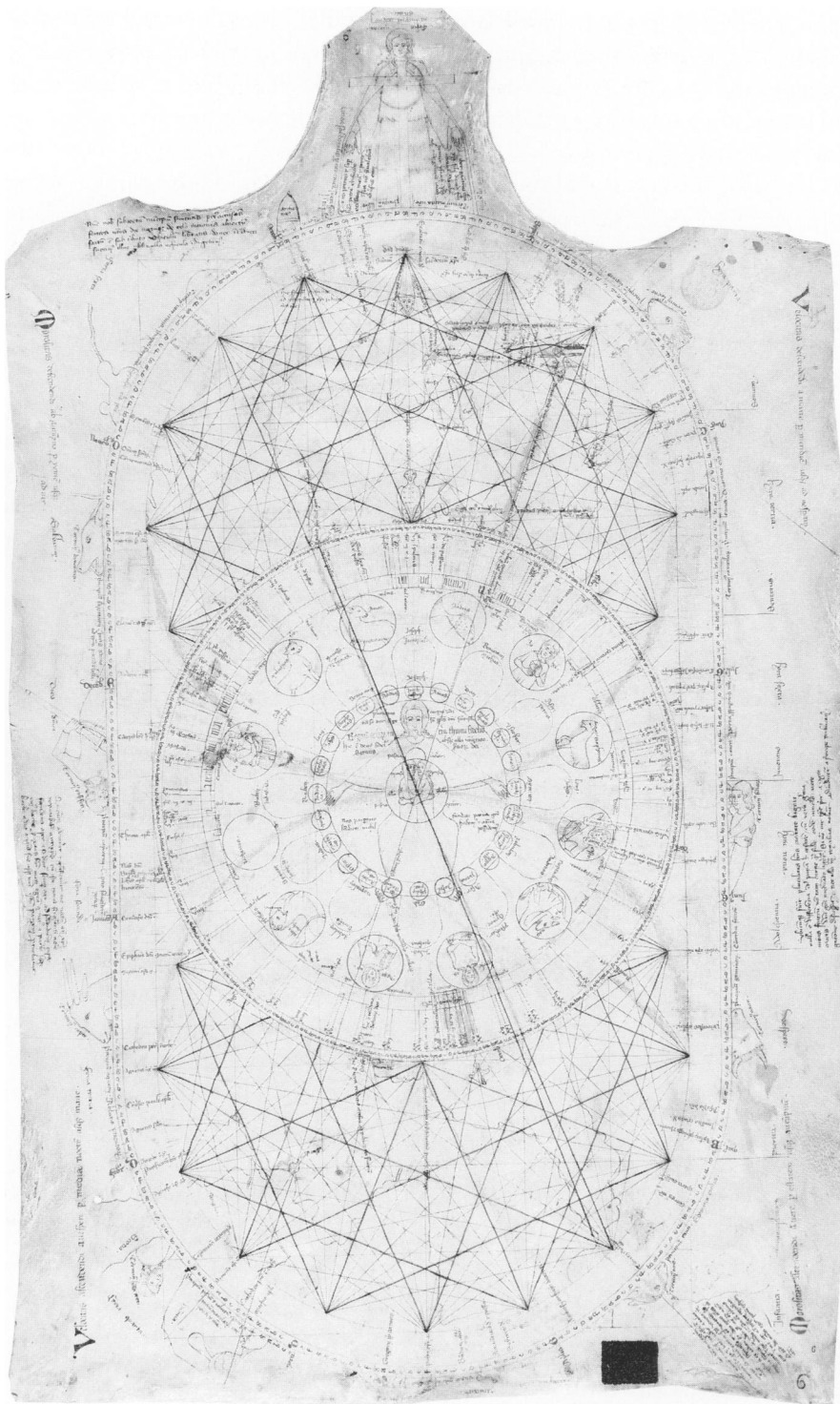
18 Emil Göller: *Die päpstliche Pönitentiarie von ihrem Ursprung bis zu ihrer Umgestaltung unter Pius V.*, Rome 1907–11; see also Bernard Guillemain: *La Cour Pontificale d'Avignon*, Paris 1966, 332–45. Guillemain suggests that Opicinus died sometime before 10 August 1355, when his position was reclaimed (344).

19 Salomon 1936 (note 5), 212.

20 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 53r: »... Incipiens ergo nasci anno domini MCCCXXXIII iterum renovari tabulam ierarchie super qua paulatim correxi declarationis libellum et super ea et super proprietatibus evangeliorum et, partim de conscientia mea adhuc valde rudi cum modica

claritate usque ad annum expectationis, aliquantulum apertis oculus meis interioribus ad discernendas ymagines terre et maris et conferendas in conscientia mea secundum libellum declarationis predictae in peciis X papiri composui...« For an explanation of his system of reckoning years, with 1335 being the year of expectation, ending with 1341 as the year of tranquillity, see Salomon 1952 (note 5), 50.

21 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 53r: »... For three continuous years I filled many and as it were innumerable folia of paper, as much great folia of larger format as small ones of lesser scraps, with diverse and varied types of images and circles concerning the descriptions of the lands of the earth and of other figures of mystery, with many explanatory captions, in such a variety of experience of every sort, so that no one work amongst them is seen to be like to another amongst those diverse things.../ ... Per hos tres annos continuos multa et quasi innumerabilia folia cartarum, tam magna maioris forme quam parva minoris peciole, diversis et variis modis ymaginum et rotarum super descriptione orbis terrarum et aliarum figurarum misterii in tanta varietate experiantie



3. Pal. lat. 1993, f. 6r: Diagram of the Mystical Body of Christ

Between June and November 1337 (with later additions to many of the pages throughout 1338 and 1339, and sparsely in 1341), he was at work on the images and text of the Vaticanus, a manuscript done on paper folios that represents a day-book filled with his thoughts on sacred and mundane matters.²²

His intentions for this work are best summarized by the following statement: »Concerning the universal explanation, spiritually, of all actions. Each man may explain his own life spiritually according to the memory of those things which he has done. Similarly, he may explain what his birth may signify together with all his actions. In similar fashion he could recall all his dreams to his mind and discuss them all with his conscience. Thence, having discussed all things, if he shall have perceived from a conference of this sort whether [these things proceed] from a lie or from a truth of faith, he will obtain through grace of God the gift of judging his own person and no other, with myself as an example. For the council of my hands taught me to judge those things which were written from my conscience.«²³

He mentions in both manuscripts that he had to stand on trial for reasons unknown during the early period of his time in Avignon. Shortly after the trial ended, he experienced several visions during a bout of illness in 1334.²⁴ During his illness, his right hand became paralyzed, which he refers to in a veiled way in the passage above, (as well as in an earlier autobiographical drawing in the Palatinus).²⁵ This paralysis was seen as a mark of special favour from God, for the ailment permitted

him to be able to draw and write down all that he experienced in miraculous fashion.²⁶

He felt graced by his special, spiritualized understanding of the new look of European portolan charts being produced in centres such as Genoa, Venice and Majorca during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.²⁷ The shift in the mapping conventions found on these charts had resulted in a different visual configuration for the continents of Europe and Africa, together with the Mediterranean sea. The term »*mappamundi*« is used here to describe the maps created by Opicinus, although his work belongs to the transitional period when the older conceptual framework of the world map was undergoing a profound change, as described by Woodward and others.²⁸

When the map is oriented eastwards, the sea begins to assume the shape of a bearded man, which, according to Opicinus, signified the presence of the Prince of Darkness, the Devil and the *mare diabolicum* (figs. 1, 2). In his imagination and in the drawings, the two continents, Africa and Europa, could assume such identities as a man and a woman, a monk and a nun, a jew and an apostle (figs. 1 to 9). It is clear that Opicinus had a portolan chart at his disposal in Avignon.²⁹

Although the parallel may seem crude to specialists in Buddhist art, his drawings functioned in a certain way as sacred mandalas, much as it has been argued that Hugh of St-Victor's drawing of the Ark of Noah, executed during the twelfth century, resembled a mandala, used for the pedagogical and mystical purposes of Hugh's monastic community.³⁰ It is clear that in many religious tra-

cuiscumque ut nullum opus ex hiis alteri simile videatur inter ista diversa cum scripturis testimonialibus multis implevi ...«

22 See the recent work by Victoria Morse, *A Complex Terrain: Church, Society and the Individual in the Works of Opicino de Canistris* (1296 – ca. 1354), Ph.D. dissertation University of California, Berkeley 1997, who plans to publish a critical edition of the Vaticanus.
23 See Salomon 1952 (note 5), 51, who omitted the last line of the entry in his transcription: »... Consilium enim manuum mearum me docuit omnia iudicare que conscripta sunt in conscientia mea.«

24 Salomon 1936 (note 5), 31–32.

25 Salomon 1952 (note 5), 47.

26 Salomon 1936 (note 5), 32.

27 The history of portolan charts has been most recently summarized by Tony Campbell: *Portolan Charts from the Late Thirteenth Century to 1500*, in: *A History of Cartography*, ed. John Brian Harley and David Woodward, I, Chicago 1987, 371–463.

28 D. Woodward, *Medieval Mappaemundi*, in: Harley and Woodward (note 27), 314–18.

29 Salomon 1952 (note 6), 50.

30 Grover Zinn: *Mandala Symbolism and Use in the Mysticism of Hugh of St-Victor*, in: *History of Religions* XII, 1973, 340.

Actu. Vy
kt. octobry

Amor spūat eſeque ab inuicē ⁊ affecto carnal appropinquat ad inuicē.
 Ar. 1. ff. de obli. 2. §. si fuit etiam i mendre ⁊ poms i pſcriptione tue ois iſtempania dicit.
 Si uo ex oppoſito fuit eſtus i pſcriptione ⁊ poms i mendre tue ois rempſia dicit.



ego p'ma cu in
 trasse g'iam
 mea fui i statu
 paupertatis iuste
 q' dr passio s'cra
 i statu uoluntarie
 paupertatis no
 alicui? ordo s'i
 q' dr exultatio
 s'cra i statu
 sup' cu reget n'c su
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 alio sollicitudis me
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ditions, both East and West, a symbolic structure was (and is) often used as an aid to meditation and cogitation about the significance of things. Carruthers describes the process by which medieval diagrams function as »realizations on parchment of ... [a] kind of meditative, *compositional* mental imaging [emphasis in original].«³¹ The framework of a particular composition was therefore an invaluable aid to individuals who wished to ponder and elaborate on sacred meaning, with the image working to stimulate further mental image-making in the mind. Although there are twenty-three diagrams using the *mappaemundi* in the Vaticanus, each image differs from the other, demonstrating the remarkable fluidity of this particular symbolic structure: Opicinus was able to vary the structure considerably, at times expanding some parts of the map, at others layering image upon image, to search out the meaning of relationships he wished to explore.

The following list enumerates some of the key concepts being explored in each of the twenty-three *mappaemundi* drawings; it is common for him to compare and contrast revealed truth in number patterns, often of twos, threes or fours, as was customary in medieval thought:³²

1. f. 53v. The pathway of sin (*via peccati*) compared to the way of salvation (*salvatio animarum*), the latter being located geographically in Avignon.
2. f. 54r. Africa as the material church (*ecclesia materialis*) compared to the higher value of Europe as the sacramental life of the church (*ecclesia sacramentalis*), with an enthroned Christ at the east (*ascensio spiritualis*).
3. f. 58r. Exploration of the states of the soul in relation to the cardinal points and four seasons.
4. f. 61r. Comparison of the concepts of the natural versus the spiritual world, symbolized by drawing the continents as the pharisee and the publican (*Affrica naturalis* and *Europa naturalis*), versus Africa the spiritual world (*Affrica spiritua-*

lis), speaking to Europe the spiritual church (*Ecclesia spiritualis*).

5. f. 61v. Comparison of Africa as the community of carnal men (*universitas carnalium*) and Europe as the church of the sick (*ecclesia infirmorum*), versus Africa as the universal charity of God (*caritas universalis in deum*) and Europe as the charity of God in the universe (*caritas dei in universo*).

6. f. 68v. Commentary on a passage from Aristotle on the velocity of the planets.

7. f. 69r. Exploration of Macrobius's Commentary on the Dream of Scipio.

8. f. 69v. Africa, as the tongue of the Jews, that is, of the carnal clergy (*lingua iudeorum id est carnalium clericorum*) and Europe as the laity (*persona gentium id est laicorum*), versus Africa as the servile Church (*servilis ecclesia*) and Europe as the spiritual Church (*spiritualis ecclesia*).

9. f. 71r. Comparison of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, with Africa as the ministry of Martha (*ministerium Marthae*) and Europe as the apostle Thomas, versus Africa as the laziness of Mary (*ocium Marie*) and Europe as the apostle Jacob.

10. f. 71v. Meditation on *Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius.

11. f. 73v. Meditation on the seven days of Creation, versus Africa as Infidelity (*infidelitas*) speaking to Europe as Faith (*fides*).

12. f. 74v. Comparison of Europe as the image of Prudence (*ymago prudentie*), versus Africa as cursed Babylon (*Babilonia maledicta*).

13. f. 76v. Comparison of Africa as the traitor Judas or carnal man (*Judas proditor id est universitas carnalium hominis*) and Europe as the Church of the people or universal Christianity (*ecclesia gentium id est christianitas universalis*), versus Africa as the synagogue (*sinagoga iudaica*) and Europe as the Apostolic church (*apostolicum templum*).

14. f. 77r. Africa as the damnation of the seductress (*dampnatio seductris*) who tries to seduce Europe

³¹ Mary Carruthers: *The Book of Memory*, Cambridge 1990, 255–56.

³² For number patterns in relation to Joachim of Fiore's

mystical musings, see Reeves and Hirsch-Reich (note 1), 1–19.

the man, versus Africa as a monk seducing the church (*seductor ecclesiae*) and Europe as the church liberated from the seducer (*ecclesia liberata a seductore*).

15. f. 78r. Meditation on the carnality of man, and the circumcision of Christ, to be understood as the renewal of man (*regeneratio hominis*), versus Africa as a nun, as the lamentation of each parish, while Europe or Christianity sleeps (*lamentatio uniuscuiusque parrochie* and *sancta christianitas requiescit*).

16. f. 79v. Meditation on the fate of Opicinus's soul, with Africa as Opicinus at the mouth of Hell (*Opicinus os inferni*), and Europe as the prostrate, wounded temple of the Lord (*Ecce prostratio templi domini... ubi sunt plurima vulnera*); by orienting the drawing to the east we see Opicinus's hope to be reconciled in Christ (*Opicinus os Domini*).

17. f. 82r. Comparison of the angels of light and angels of darkness, versus Europe as the unskilled new rector (*advena rector novus*) speaking to Africa as the alienated parish (*parrochia aliena*).

18. f. 84r. Pavia, the devil and the presence of the 7 virtues in the world.³³

19. f. 84v. Pavia and the state of clerical discord.

20. f. 85r. Africa as a monk, as the servant of the Lord (*Servus domini dei*) and Europe as the faithful servant (*Servus fidelis*), overlaid with the grid of the town of Pavia.

21. f. 85v. Signs of the zodiac, Aquarius, Gemini and Virgo, in relation to Africa, Europe and a meditation on the material Church.

22. f. 87r. The carnal church, saying it is to be called the church of Rome (*Ecce affrica id est carnalis ecclesia se dicit vocari Romana ecclesia*).

23. f. 87v. Africa as lay pride (*superbia laicalis*) and Europe as the whole priesthood (*universitas sacer-*

dotalis), contained within a large figure of the Church with Christ embracing Mary, overlaid with placenames of Italian towns from Bologna to Milan.

Many more concepts than the ones listed above are found in each drawing, but it is evident that certain themes dominate: he focusses his attention on spiritual versus carnal understanding; he is critical of the corruption of the clergy and the Church; he exhorts the inhabitants of his native Pavia to abandon their ways of darkness in preparation for the Day of Judgement.

There can be little doubt that, although he thought of himself as *philosophus* (he mentions that Pope John XXII once called him this), the level of meaning he finds in some things seems at times simplistic, even somewhat silly to the modern-day mind.³⁴ For instance, he subjected his eating habits to allegorical exegesis, stating that »at breakfast I eat like a wolf, in the evening much less«, which he related to his attitude to study and thirst for knowledge in his youth, which he did not share with others – now in later life, he wished to share his knowledge.³⁵ The Vaticanus manuscript is full of theological musings about the natural world around him, as when a comet appeared in the sky throughout the month of July 1337, and he was reminded of God's question to Job (Job 38:31): »Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion?«³⁶ Opicinus's propensity to search for meaning in even the smallest details has been treated with contempt by modern scholars, an approach which does not take into consideration the many different epistemological levels existing in medieval society, or in any one individual, at a particular point in time. Opicinus was justifiably proud of his literary output and the

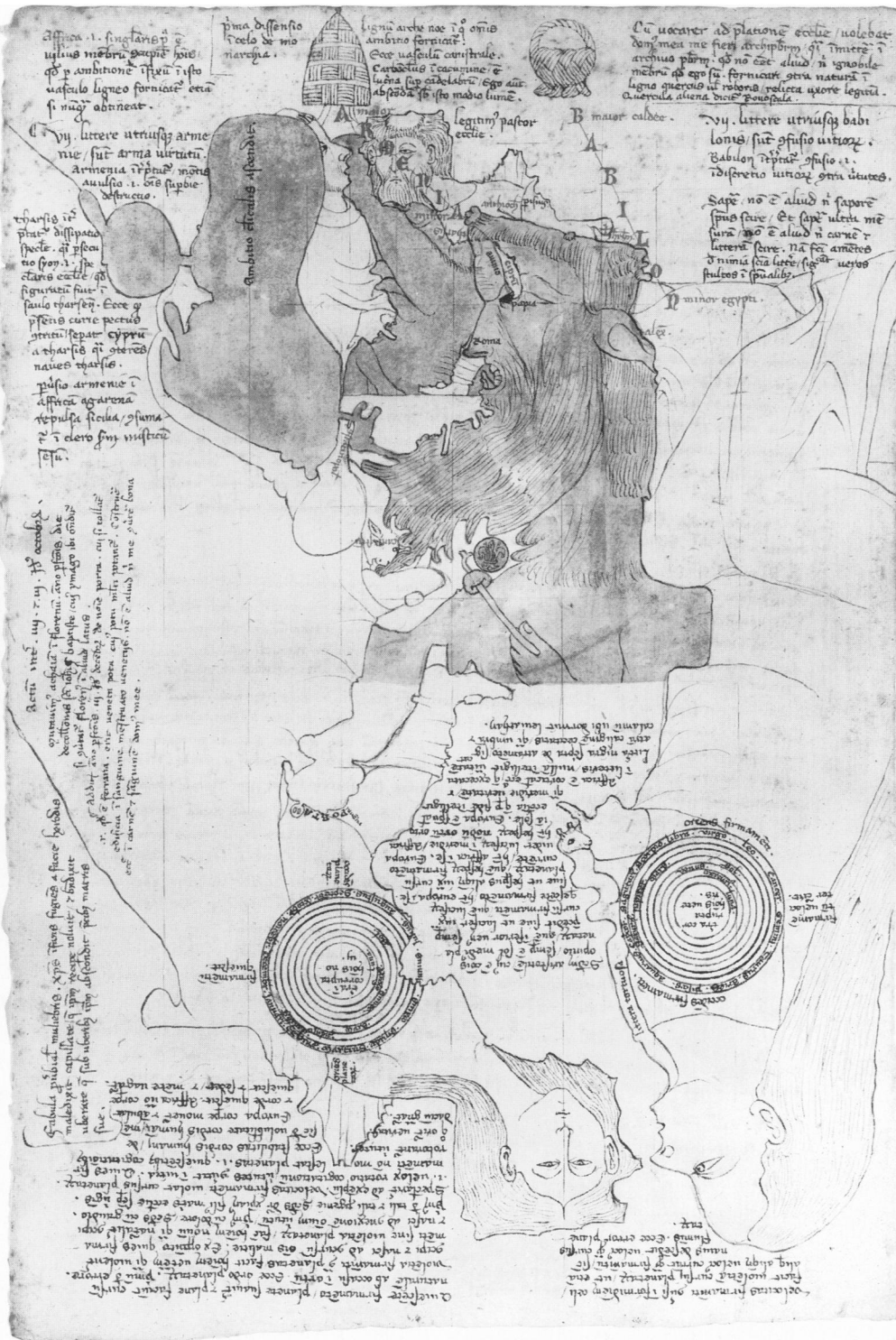
33 For a discussion of these drawings in relation to the topography of Pavia, see Pierluigi Tozzi: *Opicino e Pavia*, Como 1990.

34 Salomon 1952 (note 5), 55.

35 Salomon 1952 (note 5), 51, based on Vat.lat. 6435, f. 70v.

36 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 22r: »About the apparition of a comet. From the tenth day of July until almost the end of that month I saw a small comet making a straight path... toward the north pole... Behold the sign of the decaying

of the orbit of Arcturus, just as the Lord foretold to Job/De apparitione comete. A decima die Julii fere usque ad finem illius mensis vidi cometam pusillam facientes rectam viam... iuxta polum septentrionale... Ecce indicium dissipationis giri arcturi sicut dominus praedixerat ad Job.« The reference is to Job 38:31. »Numquid coniungere valebis micantes stellas Pleiadas, aut gyrum Arcturi poeteris dissipare?« I am grateful to Michele Mulchahey for clarification of this point.



6. Vat. lat. 6435, f. 68v: Commentary on a Passage from Aristotle on the Velocity of the Planets

drawings, but he did not receive a university education.³⁷ We are fortunate to have such a detailed recording of the inner experience of a literate clergyman and papal scribe at Avignon from this period. The problem of undervaluing literal versus more »sophisticated« modes of knowing will be returned to below.

In the next section of this study, I shall focus on a previously unexamined aspect of the drawings, namely, the working method used by Opicinus to lay out the *mappaemundi* diagrams found in both manuscripts, so that we may better understand his general line of approach to the particular problem being explored in the images. It was not only the new shape of the Mediterranean and the two continents which impressed him, it was his new-found ability to copy the map, and thereby make use of its symbolic structure that held significance for him. As he states in the Vaticanus, f. 77v: »God alone gave me the understanding so that I became able to copy a map without anybody showing me how to do it.«³⁸ Adapting new forms of knowledge about mapping coordinates and grids for copying, he discovered a way to produce endless variations on the same image. What were the major stages in his drawing process?

The identical system was used for the images in both manuscripts; it is worthwhile looking first at several of the drawings from the Palatinus manuscript to demonstrate that he had already devised the system as early as 1335. When one examines the underlying structure that make up the centre of the oval on f. 6r, it is evident that he has created a pattern of three interlocked circles (fig. 3), although the map is always constructed of two conjoined circles of equal diameter.³⁹ The bottom circle contains the shapes of Europe and Africa, visible in faint outline below the radiating, directional lines known as rhumb lines.⁴⁰ The upper circle contains the image of Mediterranean man, whose

head is just visible, next to the drawings of the eagle and Christ as Supreme Priest in f. 6r. Although it is not possible to point to a specific model that he might have seen in Genoa or Avignon, it seems likely that he had studied a portolan chart based on two rhumb systems on twin-circle charts.⁴¹

To set out the connecting circles on f. 6r he ruled down the center of the oval, both on the horizontal and vertical. The inner space of the large oval was thus bisected by two circles of equal diameter. He has traced the outlines of the two outer circles on this sheet, whereas in other drawings the underlying hidden compass marks are only visible in raking light.

He also established a proportionally-related grid of lines in this area (visible on f. 6r), to assist him with laying in the appropriate landmasses and so forth. Thus, we see him making use of another new feature of late medieval map-making, namely, the use of a grid, perhaps the same square-grid method used to modify cartographic scale on early maps, adapted here to create his endless variations on the *mappaemundi*.⁴²

The important points of conjunction used to generate the shape and disposition of the continents and the sea are evident on f. 5r of the Palatinus (fig. 2). The diameter of the two outer circles is not visible to the naked eye in this drawing, and only the outline of a third, central circle is visible. The key to his system of reproducing the map lay in the establishment of the point where the two outer circles meet – in the arch of the foot or »boot« of Italy, as may be seen here, with lines radiating out from this area. (The drawing on f. 5r has the third circle superimposed over the two outer ones to represent the calendar and signs of the zodiac).

The compass was moved a second and, as in f. 5r and f. 6r, sometimes third time depending on what concepts he wanted to superimpose over the map,

37 His education and literary output are discussed by Salomon 1952 (note 5), 45–57.

38 Salomon 1952 (note 5), 52.

39 For his use of the three interlocked circles in relation to Joachimite ideas, see Reeves and Hirsch-Reich (note 1), 298.

40 Gerald Roe Crone: *Maps and Their Makers*, Folkestone 1978, 14.

41 Campbell (note 27), 376, note 54.

42 Woodward (note 27), 322–23, and Campbell (note 27), 392.

following the vertical line up or down the oval's centre, to establish the centre points of the two outer circles. To create the Europe-Africa pair, he placed the stationary point of the compass at a point that would mark the breast of Europe, somewhere near the inwardly-curving coast of Provence, and swung the free compass arm to a point which would be in the »boot« of Italy. In all of the map-diagrams he establishes the shape of Africa by beginning the »nose« of the figure at the outer circumference of the circle, usually (depending on the proportions of the figure, which may vary slightly between drawings) within the second set of squares, if reading from the inner circumference of the oval. Thus, could the shapes of Africa, the »head« of Spain/Europe, the »leg« of Italy be drawn in their appropriate boxes in the grid.

To generate the upper part of the Mediterranean man (= the equivalent of Greece, the Holy Land, and the Black Sea), using the point in the »boot« of Italy to establish the outer edge or circumference of the second circle, the stationary point of the compass arm was placed again on the central dividing line; this point is always adjacent to the »chin« or »mouth« of the Devil-man, as may be seen in f. 5r. This devil image becomes immediately recognizable when the page or oval is turned. It is not difficult to fill in the remaining boxes of the grid with the »hair« and »beard«, etc, ... of this figure, and in many drawings, the figure is coloured to lend it greater prominence.

Not only in the Palatinus, but later in the Vaticanus manuscript, a number of *mappaemundi* images were generated in relation to each other to explain a particular concept, sometimes in mirror images, as in f. 58r (fig. 4), or otherwise in playing-card fashion, as may be seen most clearly on ff. 61r, 68v, 71r, 71v (figs. 5–8). On f. 58r, the map appears four times, to explore relationships between the

cardinal points, the four seasons and states of the human soul (fig. 4). Although not visible to the naked eye, each of the four maps is comprised of two conjoined circles. A line of four circles was thus established down the page on either side of the centre line, and Opicinus probably reversed the orientation of the page (at least) twice to create these mirror images. The midpoint of the centre line is visible in the lefthand image, at the point where two lines connecting the figures intersect. At times, when the second or subsequent map-image was created to illuminate a particular point, it was created on a much smaller scale than the primary image, as may be seen in f. 68v (fig. 6).

It is worthwhile mentioning that there is no correct orientation for reading the page. It was meant to be turned again and again, so that various aspects of its content would strike the viewer in different ways at different times, according to his or her disposition.⁴³ What was important was to find the correct, spiritualized reading, if one possessed a true understanding of God. Schmitt has described the movement of circular scholastic diagrams before the eyes as aiding the individual to ascend the spiritual path, as a visual *itinerarium mentis ad Deum*.⁴⁴ It is evident that these drawings represent moments of crystallization, of opening the doors of sensory perception and intellectual reasoning, which were brought together in a state of mystical understanding, thereby enabling Opicinus to reach a clearer understanding of God.⁴⁵

Opicinus usually began a drawing in a state of openness to God, often as a result of it being a specific holy day, or after he had read a particular text, as demonstrated in our first example. Salomon has characterized his style of diction as »oracular«, as the following passage suggests.⁴⁶ On f. 61r of the Vaticanus (fig. 5), at the top of a drawing that ana-

43 For a similar instance of a turning *mappaemundi* in Siena town hall, see Marcia Kupfer: The Lost Wheel Map of Ambrogio Lorenzetti, in: The Art Bulletin LXXVIII, 1996, 305–308.

44 Jean Claude Schmitt: Les images classificatrices, in: Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartres CXLVII, 1989, 339.

45 The interpenetration of intellectual analysis and a mystical state of understanding is characteristic of his thought; for a parallel in the case of Joachim of Fiore, see Reeves and Hirsch-Reich (note 1), 54.

46 Salomon 1952 (note 5), 55.

lyzes the concept of the world of nature versus the world of spirit, he writes: »Act [made] between the V and IIII kalends of October [27 – 28 September], on the XVI Sunday past Pentecost at which time the Book of Maccabees is beginning to be read, as a testament to the quarrels of the clergy...«⁴⁷ Presumably in response to reading about the inspirational leadership between rival factions at Leontopolis and Jerusalem, he was prompted to use the map-diagram to set up a contrast between Africa as a monk and Europe as a man, representing two aspects of the hypocritical, natural or lower forms of understanding about the world. The monk = Africa bears a small wheel or *rota* on his chest illustrating the mental process that leads the sinner to err: the individual is led from evil thoughts (*thinking, imagining, deciding, delighting in/coitatio, ymaginatio, electio, delectatio*) to consent to sin (*consensus peccati*). When the drawing is viewed with east at the top, we see Europe and Africa *spiritualis* in dialogue, shown as a nun speaking to a woman (= the Church). Europe bears a *rota* with Christ inscribed within, his wound placed at the site of Avignon. The wheel in the breast of Africa = the nun demonstrates how the interior senses must be gathered together in the spirit: we are led to knowledge of God by the processes of *meditating, contemplating, discerning, delighting in/meditatio, contemplatio, discretio, degustatio*, to their resolution in the comprehension of God, *comprehensio Dei*. On another part of the diagram he addresses the issue of the unity of the Church, a potent theme at this time during the Babylonian captivity in Avignon, reminding us of how multi-layered these diagrams are intended to be.⁴⁸

Our second example of how a particular holy day might be used as a starting point for a drawing is a little more straightforward. In a diagram on f. 71r (fig. 7) exploring the relationship between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, with the continents represented by saints Mary Magdalene and Martha, Thomas and Jacob, he writes: »Made on the XVII kalends of November [16 October] on the day of Saint Michael-in Danger-of-the Sea, which day is said to be the dedication of the major church of Saint Michael Major in Pavia. On the third day following is the sign of the Scorpio, or the dragon, against whom Michael fought with his angels.⁴⁹ And, indeed, in several places on the drawing he refers to the work of the angels in combatting evil. In one pair of comparisons, for instance, he writes: »Behold the angels' assistance, I say, in keeping watch over the perfect.«⁵⁰ Upon reversing the orientation of the page in the righthand corner, we read its complement: »Behold the ministrations of the angels on behalf of the sick.«⁵¹ In another place on the drawing he makes reference to the mythical monster, the Tarasque, which St Martha tamed.⁵² The universe is therefore filled with relationships, from the revealed truth of physical geography, to the hidden, metaphysical action of the angels.

Like many other medieval scholastics, Opicinus was fascinated by the interpretative possibilities of four-fold exegesis, either of texts or images. In the case of images, this meant examining the import of a particular image on 1) a literal or historical level, 2) in an allegorical or mystical way, 3) on the tropological (often identified as an emotional or moral level), and 4) anagogical reading.⁵³ The drawing on f. 73v of the Seven Days of Creation is a clear exposition of the four-fold levels of meaning, as

47 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 61r: »Actum inter V et IIII kalendas octobris tunc dominica XVI post pentecostam tunc incipitur legere liber machabeorum in testimonium litium clericorum...«

48 See Guillaume Mollat, trans. Janet Love, 9th ed.: *The Popes at Avignon, 1305–1378*, London 1963; Yves Renouard, trans. Denis Bethell: *The Avignon Papacy 1305–1403*, London 1970; and the useful overview of Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, trans. James Sievert, 3rd ed.: *The Papacy*, New York, 1988, 198–218.

49 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 71r: »Actum XVII kalendas novembris

die sancti michaeli in periculo maris, qua die dicitur dedicatio ecclesie sancti michaelis maioris papienis. Ab hac tertia die est signum scorpionis sive draconis adversus quem michael pugnatur cum angelis suis.«

50 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 71r: »Ecce assistentia angelorum speculariter dico propter perfectos.«

51 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 71r: »Ecce ministeria angelorum propter infirmos.«

52 Salomon 1962 (note 5), 137–41.

53 Anna Esmeijer: *Divina Quaternitas*, Amsterdam 1978, 1–16.

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viewed by Opicinus (fig. 9); the exegetical process is not explored as directly in any of the other diagrams in his œuvre.

As was customary in the drawings, the image of Mediterranean man may be seen blocked out on the lower half of the page, and the continents of Europe and Africa are the spaces that receive colour. The culmination or meaning of the drawing is the large »pyramidshaped« lozenge bearing a series of seven aligned circles. This shape occurs frequently in his map-diagrams; he used it to allude to the concept of Noah's ark. On the drawing of the material church and the sacramental church mentioned in the list above as no. 2 (f. 54r), he identifies the location of Noah's ark near Christ's throne and writes »our refuge at the Second Flood«, most likely an allusion to the hope of salvation at the end of the world.⁵⁴ In the Creation drawing, it is possible to read about God's creative act on each of the seven days in the righthand column of text, which ends with, »Behold the beginnings of all philosophy. Behold the tree and lineage of our faith. Behold Noah's ark whose side door Christ reserved for life. All these things are mystically referred to the mystery of our redemption. Without which all these things are different.«⁵⁵ Every order of life is collected together in this drawing, and he draws comparisons between paired concepts such as spirit versus animal, rational versus irrational, things with or without sensation (*sensible/insensible*), and so forth.

When the drawing is reversed, Africa has become a man, labelled Infidelity, in dialogue with Europe as Faith. In line with his clear sympathies for the Avignon papacy, Europe has a medallion

of Christ on her breast, which is located in the general vicinity of Avignon, with the following paired concepts enumerated around it: Spirit-Word; Christ-Man; Beginning-End. The continents must be related to the lefthand column of text, where we see clearly his attempt to lay out an exegetical scheme for the authors of the four Gospels. He has written: »Historical Matthew establishes the faith literally, in the name of Mark, Luke and John. Allegorical Mark, leads back all that which is read out to the mystical sense, lest we remain on the literal level, and he does this in the name of Matthew, Luke and John. Tropological Luke arranges moral lessons from these letters for the nourishment of the infirm, in the name of Matthew, Mark and John. Anagogical John converts all to invisible matters, in the name of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Behold what each one does for the others. By the grace of the Word...«⁵⁶

The key to understanding the image lies in the way he related the natural and spiritual worlds in a hierarchical system of understanding. Here he uses the parts of the human body to classify the superior or lower value of each of the evangelists, a common strategy in many of his drawings. Near the body of Africa the unfaithful, he writes in cryptic fashion: »As the pectorals descend to the loins, Matthew at the loins of the infidel, Luke joined together to the chest«, indicating that Matthew's work is to be regarded as being lower in understanding than in the gospel account by Luke (although of course each gospel writer has his own value within the total scheme).⁵⁷ Similarly, John's gospel has a higher value than Mark's: »As the stomach ascends to the chest, Mark at the stomach

⁵⁴ He situates this writing in a location that would correspond with Armenia, where it was believed Noah's ark came to rest. The connection here with the ideas of Hugh of St Victor and Noah's Ark (Smalley, note 3, 95–97) is obvious.

⁵⁵ Vat. lat. 6435, f. 73v: »Ecce principia totius philosophie. Ecce arbor et linea fidei nostri. Ecce archa noe cuius ostium laterale christus reservavit ad vitam. Hec omnia mystice referuntur ad redemptionis nostre misterium. Sine quo hec omnia varia sunt.«

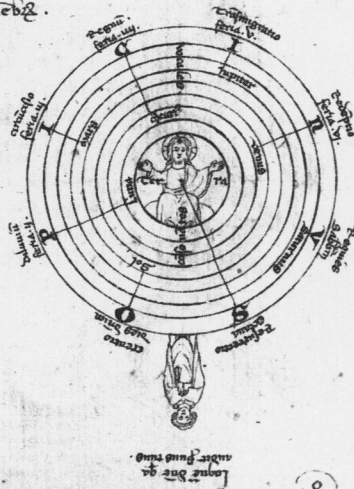
⁵⁶ Vat. lat. 6435, f. 73v: »Matheus historicus fundat fiem ad litteram nomine Marci, Luce et Johannis. Marcus alle-

goricus omnia recitata reducit ad mysticum sensum ne quisceremus in littera et hoc nomine Mathei, Luce et Johannis. Lucas tropologicus de litteris illis mores componit ad nutriendos infirmos, nomine Mathei, Marci et Johannis. Johannes anagogicus totum convertit ad invisibilem rem, nomine Mathei, Marci et Luce. Ecce quod unumquisque facit pro ceteris verbi gratia...«

⁵⁷ Vat. lat. 6435, f. 73v: »Ut pectorales descendant ad lumbos, Matheus ad lumbos infidelium, Lucas ad pectus coniunctui.«

la utruq; pmeret honore Spectans p uigiem maria itollit unaqueq; proelia / r p ioseph
 rector r minist eccle / r p pueru ihu / spacia ipi xpiani no etate si spu r uirtutib; qas
 uita medietat; qle r mar i etate ptea glificat i carne / vniuersal ecc r plius ptea glificans ex
 immortalitate corpea / ioseph semor corpalit morit / r psona ad mortat unicuq; rectoris post
 functione officij a solo ministe. C. Triplex habet testimonium hui rei no p me ita si p oporis meis
 actiaz rectorib; pmo de illa die qua legit euagium de desponsione marie ioseph r eius traductio
 pmo iudicij or adu'sariu meu / cui e illa dies maledicta natiuitas si no mea / uix ada misse illi diei
 ad itonu. hodie factus q uocat dno / r saluabim nos. p hodie intelligit spectans ecc / q no subuice
 ipi / r qua no h pte ho ille carnat q sub ipse celus. Et mane uidebitis glum ei. p mane i
 telligit b'itudis spes / qua nung uidebit ille adu'sariu me. Oro. ds q nos redemptio me anua. ex
 le. r. uetum qd iudice securi uideam. h sola dies h' ordine iudicij. ut unguisq; discat iudi
 cate suu suu no alienu sic ego meu teneor iudicare. ad romanos pnapu eple. paulus suus ihu d
 uocat aplo seggatus euagium dei qd an p'p'at p p'p'as fides i sepiis fgo de filio suo q facit e ei
 ex semine ds qm carne. Et nos ex semine ihu xpi sedm fide adu'sus illu uetem hoieiu q ex semine
 ingratu / Ego emi p'mo cu illo / r ille mecu facti sum / uo lobardie / cui umilio / r matris no
 factus nec spual. si carnal sue d'f'ctio uocat papia de me emi giuneto cu illo p'p'at d. ds.
 Ecce emi i ingratu p'p'at si r i m'p'at p'p'at meo p'p'at me mat mea. de me uo seggato
 ab illo p'p'at paulus aplo. Cu aut placuit ei q me seggauer de uro mat' meo. i. otinus no
 acquieu' cum r sanguin. subaudi corruptib; dam' meo. ad p'p'at redeam. Si da uigiliu natiua
 tis dno uenit i die dno. de illa. Crasina die delebit ingratu r'e. Ecce delotio anty'p' q nat' e
 ante xpm p una die / r regnabit sup nos saluator mudi. Adu'sus que dicit ille neq; p'mo cu ad
 heretib; sibi. Nolum' huc regnare sup nos / Sedm testimoniu illi diei e cu q'firmatus fuy ad
 p'sente p'p'at / ac si in dicit. ioseph fili ds. noli timere accipe maria uigile tua qm euagium ei'e
 diei. C. Tertiu testimoniu illi diei h' ano p'p'at huetum me ignorate ad illi uigiliu euocada
 cu nocte illa i uisione me uiderim i schaudia uigis malens nutrietis plu meu uerib; meis i
 medio mulier; me admirante quom potuisse filiu pare / Exp'factus aut a sopno p plures dies
 r anos cognau' sup ille mist' factum qd uix unq; potu' itellig' m'p' m. Quicq; factu e i ca
 me / totu refert i testimoniu omnium alioz / ut p'statu sup ecc'as p'p'at obsequ' reglam
 b'u marie uigis r ioseph / Imitem' ioseph i arte fabili / ut excitem' nos metipos in opib; bonis
 edificatijs nri r uigil' nra; p'p'at Imitem' r maria i officio matris ad nutrienda sp'antia
 p'p'at me ex incorruptibili lacte. i. salubri doctrina.

Actu. viij. h' nouebz.
 de sup'p'at.



Actu hoc op. viij. h' nouebz

vocales nois mei trado soli marie
 iou r sacro q sit supiores planeto.
 Cosmates aut lune, mercurio, ueneri
 r incorrupti die q sit ignores pla
 nete cu tra.
 Expletis etatib; sibi abada usq; ad
 nouissima die actua. trinsp'at
 viij. iustis mee etatis facio de
 noie meo c'atu r corona dno
 nro. Qd de me ad l'ram facit
 dico / r cetis xpianis spualit fide
 dico. Delecti inigite r'e / p'p'at
 e nob incorruptib; tra. Q u h' h'
 adhuc p'p'at mudi no pot uideri
 si incorruptib; tra. Q u uo fuit
 ab o' p'p'at liber r madus i' pos
 s'bet incorruptib; tra. Nemo pot
 uenire ad dei patre n' p xpm. Nemo pot
 uenire ad xpm n' p iusticia xpi. i. p uia
 obedi ad p'p'at p'p'at no alia.

of the faithful, John at the chest set apart». ⁵⁸ It may seem simplistic of Opicinus to use this type of graphic, bodily metaphor to classify the different qualities of the gospel accounts, but it was quite common in the later Middle Ages to attempt to reconcile higher, spiritual forms of understanding within notions of the microcosm. ⁵⁹ The result was a network of analogies joining these forms of knowledge together.

Ladner has observed that modern writers in medieval studies tend to pay more attention to the abstract, mystical meaning of symbolism and devalue concrete and literal ways of thinking, which were in fact greatly esteemed in medieval culture. ⁶⁰ Throughout Opicinus's work, we can find many examples of this type of literal form of connection, which seems simplistic to the modern mind. Although not evident in this drawing, he played endlessly with the significance of etymologies, another common epistemological strategy in medieval culture. ⁶¹ As the following example indicates, even a single word could spark off a trajectory of thought for Opicinus that is not always easy to comprehend today. As stated earlier, Opicinus often began work on his drawings on holy days. In one of the drawings exploring the text of *Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius (f. 71v), he writes in the margin: »Act begun on the XVII kalends of November [16 October], finished on the day of St Luke the evangelist [18 October], who wrote [his] Gospel in parts of Achaia, and of Boethius, the true philosopher« (fig. 8). ⁶² Although the connection may seem forced to us, he was apparently reminded on this feast day that, just as Boethius was seized and put on trial, so too the apostle Paul was arrested by the Jews and tried for sedition in Achaia, the

southern half of Greece. All three men – Paul, Boethius, Opicinus – suffered similar conditions of trial and tribulation, one in Greece, one in Pavia, the third in fourteenth-century Avignon. He may also have been reminded of the fact that 18 October is the feastday of St Boethius. ⁶³ In establishing lines of significance that might otherwise not seem related logically, Opicinus was able to elevate the most mundane of worldly details, and ascribe a higher, spiritualized value to the analogies which he perceived within the universe. ⁶⁴

The multiple meaning of these images, which may result from turning the drawing, is evident in the Creation sheet. It is no accident that directly above the head of the devil or Mediterranean man in the drawing, we read the words: »Jesus, son of man, Mary Mother of God, the husband Joseph«, in relation to »Men of the Spirit« and »[The] door of the ark of Noah«, or that the wheel on Europe's breast reminds us of Christ, the beginning and the end. Text and image work together in perfect harmony. As a result of the multi-layered fabrication of these drawings, we are privy to new and manifold moments of revelation each time we look at a drawing.

We may conclude after looking at the *mappae-mundi* drawings that they are intended to reconcile a set of relationships that Opicinus wished to explore, using a bodily level of understanding as their foundation, the sense of geography as metaphor and reality to reveal an additional layer of truth about the universe, in relation to God's plan of sacred history, from creating to end. As we have seen, their function is largely exegetical, with symbolism and allegory playing a major role in their conception.

⁵⁸ Vat. lat. 6435, f. 73v: »Ut ventrales ascendunt ad pectus, Marcus ad ventrem fidelium, Johannes ad pectus discretiui.« For the significance of the heart in medieval thoughts on the body, see Jacques Le Goff: *Head or Heart? The Political Use of Body Metaphors in the Middle Ages*, in: *Zone. Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher et al., New York 1989, 13–27.

⁵⁹ One of the most important thinkers who contributed to the notion of microcosm and macrocosm in the later Middle Ages was Bernard Silvestris, whose work was

known to Opicinus. See Bernardus Silvestris: *Cosmographia*, ed. P. Dronke, Leiden 1978, 29–50.

⁶⁰ Gerhard Ladner: *Medieval and Modern Understanding of Symbolism: A Comparison*, in: *Speculum* LIV, 1979, 223–56.

⁶¹ Salomon 1962 (note 5), 146; Smalley (note 3), 1–36, and more recently, Howard Bloch: *Etymologies and Genealogies. A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages*, Chicago 1983, 11–29, 55–58.

⁶² Vat. lat. 6435, f. 71v: »Actum inceptum XVII kalendas novembris et consummatum in die sancti luce evangeliste

At the bottom of f. 79r in the Vaticanus, in another »Actum« completed on the 8th November, Opicinus drew a *rota* of the geocentric universe, as a meditation on his name (fig. 10). He says »from my name I make a circle and crown of our Lord.«⁶⁵ As he states to the right of the image: »I relate the vowels of my name to the Sun, Mars, Jove and Saturn, which are the superior planets«, and he drew lines between the circular disposition of his name in relation to these planets.⁶⁶ The consonants were harmonized with the lower planets in the system: Moon, Mercury, Venus and the Earth. Christ appears as *terra* in the connection between octaves in the liturgical calendar, which he links to the following phases in the history of God's salvific plan for the human race: the *dies dominica* = Creation, *feria II* = Flood, *feria III* = Circumcision, *feria IV* = Reign, *feria V* = Transmigration, *feria VI* = Redemption, *sabbatum* = Repose and *octava* = Resurrection. Later in the same entry, he says »He who still has desire of the world cannot see but the corruptible earth. But he who shall have been freed and cleansed from all desire already possesses the incorruptible earth.«⁶⁷ In a very real sense, this simple medallion represents a sacred cosmograph for Opicinus, with its harmonies of different categories: the universe with its planets, the ranking of vowels and consonants, the correlation of liturgical octaves with corresponding phases in the Christian story – all these proclaim the truth of the different levels of the vision of God in one synthetic statement. When the drawing is reversed, as had happened with the *mappaemundi* diagrams in this manuscript, we are left to contemplate the

diminutive figure of a praying priest who says »Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening«, perhaps at some level an image of Opicinus himself.⁶⁸

Much work remains to be done on the text and images created by Opicinus de Canistris during his exile in Avignon. Although in the past scholars have felt that this obsessive, endless repetition of the *mappaemundi* provides evidence of a deep pathology in his soul, I have tried to suggest a different reading here. Camille has suggested that Opicinus hoped to prevent the stripping away of a stratified and unified Augustinian world order through the creation of these drawings and that he channeled his knowledge of the divine through his body.⁶⁹ As I have indicated, the process of repeating the image permitted its author to be continually transformed in a number of ways, bodily, mentally and intuitively. Thus was he able to effect in some small measure an experiential re-creation of God's world, to establish many new points of comprehension, which were at once internal and transcendental. In places his sense of the relationships and their ultimate meaning seems hidden, cryptic, obsessive, yet, as he himself wrote many times throughout the Vaticanus in relation to his words and images: »Who has ears to hear will hear.«⁷⁰ This symbolic structure was particularly useful to him as a focus for meditation and cogitation, as a means to analyze and make meaning according to the dictates of his conscience, to open himself further to his God, both in the making of these images, and whenever he chose to contemplate his drawings thereafter.

quae evangelium scripsit in partibus achaie et boetie verus philosophus.«

63 I am grateful to Michele Mulchahey for bringing this connection to my attention.

64 For the use of analogies between the two spheres of knowledge, see Gillian Evans: *Philosophy and Theology in the Middle Ages*, London and New York 1993, 89.

65 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 79r: »... facio de nomine meo circuitum et coronam domino nostro.«

66 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 79r: »... Vocales nominis mei trado soli marti iovi et saturno qui sunt superiores planete. Con-

sonantes autem lune mercurio veneri et incorruptibili terre qui sunt inferiores planete cum terra...«

67 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 79r: »... Qui habet ad huc concupiscentiam mundi non potest videre nisi corruptibilem terram. Qui vero fuerit ab omni concupiscentia liber et mundus iam possidet incorruptibilem terram...«

68 Vat. lat. 6435, f. 79r: »Loquere domine quia audit servus tuus.«

69 Camille (note 15), 87, 94.

70 As, for example, on f. 53v in relation to the diagram of the via peccati: »Qui habet aures audiendi, audiat.«

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