

Creation and Creativity in Medieval Art

Illustrating Genesis



Amsterdam
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Beate Fricke

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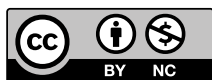
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Acknowledgments

Peter Cornelius Claussen once asked me which came first, the book or the baby. The baby was faster. The book took a while. The first chapters were written as a German habilitation, playfully using the intricate relationship between *zeugen* (procreate) and *bezeugen* (testify) and departing from scenes of the Fall of Man and other illustrations of the Book of Genesis related to sexuality and the creation of the world in late medieval art. After beginning as assistant professor at Berkeley, I realized that the project was covering an area usually taught by my colleague, Elizabeth Honig. Therefore, I started over and went back in time, trying to understand the origins of the intrinsic relationship between creation and procreation in late medieval thought. My main question was to understand the extent to which medieval artists dedicating their creativity to come up with new images for seemingly old themes illustrating the beginning of the Bible. A first draft had two very unequal parts – the first discussing images of the creation of the cosmos, and the second medieval ideas about procreation and the origin of man. The two parts never aligned with a working book manuscript, so I decided to focus on key moments in the history of illustrating the Genesis – moments revealing original reflections by medieval artists connecting ideas about divine and human creativity.

During the many twists, turns, and restarts on this journey I have had wonderful discussions, been inspired by many colleagues, friends, and students, and received extremely valuable feedback. Among them, I would like to single out my graduate students at Berkeley – Jess Bailey, Andrew Griebeler and Andrew Sears – who accompanied me on many detours at various stages of this project. Their ideas, their generosity and their patience were steady sources of inspiration; they taught me more than I could teach them. A first draft of this book was completed after sharing an office with Arno Schubbach and Vera Wolff for a year in 2012. The lively debates at the chair for Wissenschaftsforschung and at the Zentrum für Geschichte des Wissens, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) Zürich/Universität Zürich, inspired my writing. I am grateful to Michael Hagner, who invited me to join his group as guest. Among my colleagues, I would like to particularly thank Frank Bezner for his help with the oddities of medieval Latin authors and passages, and Aden Kumler for her tremendous help in commenting on an entire draft and telling me frankly to reorganize the project. Several collaborations have followed since then, and I am infinitely grateful for every minute and hour of thinking, teaching and writing together. Like Peter Cornelius Claussen, Theresa Holler, Michael Hagner, and Frances and Randolph Starn, Aden has always believed in this project. During my time as a professor at Berkeley my colleagues discussed a longer draft and offered extremely valuable feedback. Reading Genesis poetry in Middle

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Beate Fricke

Introduction

An act of creation was considered a twofold act in Western medieval thought:¹ first, creatures were given a shape, and afterwards they were animated with a soul.² Living beings were created according to a form their maker had in mind (*forma concepta in mente artificis*), shaping the idea before giving matter a shape. The second step of animation – the bestowing of a soul on humans, animals, monsters, ideas, works of art, and artifacts – also had a source, namely an original idea, thought, or inspiration. This twofold interpretation of creativity was discussed by Western medieval scholars in the context of the divine acts of creation recounted in Genesis.³

1 In the distinction he draws between formation and creation, Thomas Aquinas refers to Augustine's *Super Gen. ad Litt.* Aquinas, *In Psalmos Davidis expositio*, 31, 32, 8; 3: "In creation, two things are to be considered, the form itself and the creation itself. Both are treated. First, he discusses the form, when he says 'For he spoke and they were made' (Psalm 32:9). [N.B.: Throughout this book, I use the Douay–Rheims translation of the Vulgate for English-language biblical citations]. He therefore says 'For he spoke.' Augustine writes 'All things formed are through the Word, because created things stand in relation to God as artifact to artificer. Whence as every form of an artifact is from the concept of the form in the mind of the artificer, so too every form of things is from the concept of the divine Word' (7 super Gen. ad Litt)" – "In creatione autem sunt duo consideranda: scilicet ipsa formatio, et ipsa creatio. Utrumque autem est hic. Nam primo ostendit ipsam formationem, cum dicit, *Ipsa dixit* etc. Secundo ipsam creationem, cum addit, *Ipsa mandavit* etc. Dicit ergo, *Quoniam ipse dixit*: Augustinus, 7 Super Gen. ad Litt.: "Omnis formatio est per verbum, quia res creatae se habent ad Deum sicut artificiatia ad artificem. Unde sicut omnes formae artificiatia sunt a forma concepta in mente artificis, ita omnis forma rerum est a verbo divino concepto."

2 Like Augustine, Alain de Lille makes this distinction: Alanus ab Insulis, *Liber in distinctionibus dictionum theologicarum*, 754D: "Creare proprie ex nihilo aliquid facere, quando scilicet materia et forma creantur insimul, unde potest dici Deus creator, opus eius creatio. Dicitur res creata creatura, quasi concreatura, quia simul materia et forma creantur, unde in Genesi: In principio creavit Deus coelum et terram. Dicitur plasmare vel procreare, unde in Genesi: Creavit Deus cete grandia."

3 In discussing the six days of creation in his *Summa*, Aquinas argues, for example, that the first act of creation was the idea, the finding of a perfect form; and the second either an operation (*operatio*) or attained through one, having its origin in the first: "But the first perfection is the cause of the second, because the form is the principle of operation." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, I^a q. 73 a. 1 co: "I answer that, The perfection of a thing is twofold, the first perfection and the second perfection. The 'first' perfection is that according to which a thing is substantially perfect, and this perfection is the form of the whole; which form results from the whole having its parts complete. But the 'second' perfection is the end, which is either an operation, as the end of the harpist is to play the harp; or something that is attained by an operation, as the end of the builder is the house that he makes by building. But the first perfection is

These divine acts, together with reflections on the origin of the cosmos, shaped the ideas concerning human acts of creation and the origins of human creativity developed in the Middle Ages.

In this book I explore essential differences between medieval and modern ideas about acts of creation. It seems to me that the approach emerging with modernity has obscured our view of the work and self-understanding of medieval artists. As key elements in that self-understanding, I will first consider the negotiation between humility and pride addressed by artists in the Middle Ages, their navigation between vice and virtue in making use of divine gifts, as well as their ability to craft and create – to be art makers (artifices) just like the Creator. Second, I analyze forms of artistic self-representation in illustrations of acts of creation: Genesis according to the biblical account; and the creation of the cosmos according to writings by antique and medieval natural philosophers. These ideas were being transmitted through written manuscripts that were reproduced, read, and reflected upon in medieval scriptoria producing illuminated manuscripts. Third, I look at the relationship between *ars* and *scientia*, craft and knowledge as manifest in the late medieval period, as the invention of new images and modes of representation was key to the mediation of new knowledge generated by a “scientific revolution” in that period: a development unfolding in the course of the reception and integration of Aristotelian ideas and Arabic knowledge by Christian natural philosophers in the late medieval period. (We see that revolution reflected in both the Hamburg Bible of 1255 and the Holkham Bible of 1335.) Illustrations in manuscripts, including diagrams and tables, became a forum for demonstrating and expressing both universal knowledge and superior craftsmanship.

Finally, in focusing on the creation of new images for encyclopedic manuscripts in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, I can show that with the emergence of both new iconographical forms and new combinations of different representational modes in the same miniatures, a new understanding of the artistic practice of “illumination” emerges – the illumination of manuscripts on the one hand and the illumination of their beholder on the other.⁴

the cause of the second, because the form is the principle of operation. Now the final perfection, which is the end of the whole universe, is the perfect beatitude of the Saints at the consummation of the world; and the first perfection is the completeness of the universe at its first founding, and this is what is ascribed to the seventh day.”

4 On the basis of earlier illuminations, Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 142 has demonstrated that “[w]ords and images together are two ‘ways’ of the same mental activity – invention.” Camille, “Illuminating Thought,” and Burnett, “Give Him the White Cow,” among others, have closely considered the role of images and inscriptions in the classroom, in memorizing, and as intellectual stimulation. The past decades of groundbreaking scholarship on the mediating qualities of images and the concepts underlying them have seen scrutiny of the relationship between the viewer, the mental image, and the actual picture, with analysis of vision, perception, illusion, and reception. This approach originates in interest in the

In analyzing and contextualizing a specific group of manuscript illuminations, I am also describing the rise of claims for pictorial authority. At this study's core are three manuscripts – a commentary on Genesis, a bible, and a picture bible – that are as exemplary as they are exceptional in the way they make manifest the strong interdependence between a constellation of texts: the canonical version of the Book of Genesis; commentaries disseminating and connecting ancient works of philosophy; late antique discussions of creation; and medieval Christian and Islamic efforts to merge and link new insights into the cosmos with ancient theories about its creation. Encyclopedic literature collects and rearranges such ideas and newly cross-pollinates the illumination of bibles. There are two reasons for my focus on manuscripts: first, as the manuscripts' written content also addresses questions related to artistic labor, they can disclose reflections by their makers about their own work; and, second, the composition of images, especially those involving new iconography that embedded additional layers of meaning in the scene of an act of creation, can be considered as a creative act in itself.⁵

The influx of new theories about the creation of the cosmos from the twelfth century onward required many original, newly composed images. Studying them carefully is therefore essential for understanding the genesis and content of the new ideas. In most cases we initially find such new images in manuscripts illuminating the Book of Genesis before they are absorbed into other genres, for example portal sculpture and panel painting. Furthermore, in the context of manuscript illumination, colophons do not only provide us with dates, sites, and sometimes even the names of artists. In the words of Lawrence Nees, they also “often go far beyond mere signatures and repetitive formulae to attest to the high esteem in which the scribe held his own work.”⁶

The written expressions and history of medieval signatures and the problem of a historiographic heritage resting on Vasarian narratives around the concept

maker–image–beholder relationship; but it moves past that relationship to analyze the mediating qualities of images. See Hamburger and Bouché, *The Mind's Eye*; Ganz et al., *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren*; Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*; Nelson, *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*; Camille, *The Gothic Idol*; Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie*; Belting, *Bild und Kult*; Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*; Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*; Kessler and Wolf, *The Holy Face*; Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren*; and Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel*.

5 Composing a manuscript requires close collaboration between scribe and illuminator, who are sometimes one and the same. The unity of scribe and illuminator is assumed for a number of manuscripts throughout the medieval period. Particularly well-known examples are: Eadfrith of the Lindisfarne Gospels (seventh century); Florentius Moralia with an elaborate full-page colophon composition to his memory inserted in a tenth-century manuscript; Herrad of Landsberg and Hildebert in a twelfth-century German manuscript (discussed in chapter 1); and Matthew Paris in England in the mid thirteenth century. See Tilghman, “Pattern, Process, and the Meaning in the Lindisfarne Gospels.” On graphic devices as part of medieval illuminations see Brown et al., *Graphic Devices*.

6 Nees, “The Originality of Early Medieval Artists,” 84.

of “genius” have received extensive scholarly scrutiny since the various studies by Peter Cornelius Claussen. Nevertheless, we still need to develop better models for analyzing medieval images as sources concerning artistic labor and as a medium of self-reflection.⁷ In this respect, Larry Nees observes that to understand a “rich and complex image one needs to assess both the process of copying and adapting earlier sources and the addition of individual, meaningful alterations in that process.”⁸ For his part, Jeffrey Hamburger has addressed the topic of how images of John writing the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, could encompass both painting and writing (as in the Greek term *grapho*) and how they could embody reflections about the nature of creation inscribed into the flesh of the parchment.⁹

Likewise, Bruno Reudenbach has underscored the importance of Theophilus’s reflections on artistic production in prologues of the *Schedula diversarum artium* (written at the turn or beginning of the twelfth century),¹⁰ while Heidi Gearhart has analyzed the influence of Theophilus’s reception of encyclopedic knowledge on the development of his “theory” of medieval art in these prologues.¹¹ Theophilus – the pseudonym of an unknown Romanesque author who collected and systemized knowledge about different artistic technologies – explicitly relates the divine acts of creation described in Genesis to the work of medieval artists. Like God, but as his servant and at his commission, the human poet and artist create *ex nihilo*.¹²

To better reconstruct the intellectual endeavor undertaken by medieval artists when creating new images and to enhance our understanding of the product of both their minds and their hands, we therefore need to pay renewed attention to the concept of creative freedom. In this regard, it is important to note that what Theophilus puts in writing artists were demonstrating in their works, for example

7 Claussen, “Früher Künstlerstolz”; Claussen, “Kathedralgotik und Anonymität”; Claussen, *Magistri Doctissimi Romani*; Claussen, “Nachrichten von den Antipoden.” See Dietl, *Sprache der Signatur*, for the largest corpus of vernacular literature and a bibliography. The complex relationship between commissioner and artist is discussed by Elbern, “Auftraggeber und Künstler.” For early medieval goldsmiths, see Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, 46; Bredekamp, “Das Mittelalter als Epoche der Individualität”; Bredekamp, “Ich-Werdung des Werkes im Mittelalter”; Boffa, *Artistic Identity*; Camille, *Master of Death*; Ruffer, *Werkprozess*; Reudenbach, “Individuum ohne Bildnis?”; Seidel, *Legends in Limestone*; Legner, *Artifex*; Kris and Kurz, *Die Legende vom Künstler*, 64–86; Kruse, *Wozu Menschen malen*; Emison, *Creating the “Divine” Artist*.

8 Nees, “The Originality of Early Medieval Artists,” 97.

9 Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*; Hamburger, *Script as Image*. Eric Palazzo observed that Hamburger “recalls the importance in Christian theology of the theme of Creation at the heart of the discourse on the ‘Verbum’ and its simultaneous written and visual dimensions.” See Palazzo, “Review.”

10 Speer, *Zwischen Kunsthandwerk und Kunst*, xviii–xxii, on the *Schedula* as “open text” rather than a composition by one author, and Kroustallis, “Theophilus Matters.”

11 Gearhart, *Theophilus*. The *Schedula* is referred to as both *Schedula diversarum artibus* and *De diversis artibus*, and was attributed to the goldsmith Roger of Helmarshausen. See *ibid.* and Gearhart, “From Divine Word to Human Hand.”

12 Reudenbach, “Werkkünste und Künstlerkonzept,” 246.

stone-sculpting, goldsmithing, and casting bronze – activities related to the work of Bezaleel, the first artist mentioned in the Bible, and on wall paintings depicting Genesis.¹³ These murals have received significant scholarly attention; but their monumental scale and function as decoration on the walls of a church offered less freedom for artistic experimentation and self-expression than the illustrations of Genesis discussed in this book.¹⁴

The book's starting-point is the following argument: medieval artists developing striking new ideas for representing (divine) acts of creation were embedding into their artistic works many layers of thought on (their potential to create and be creative) creation and creativity, including their own.¹⁵ But these artists did not only unfold their self-reflective potential in manuscript margins and the ornamented capitals of church architecture, which is to say in locations offering a degree of artistic freedom, as Meyer Schapiro and Michael Camille have demonstrated.¹⁶ Moving past that limited framework, my analysis of innovative illustrations will focus on manuscript illuminations of Genesis, and in particular on illustrations of the most intensively discussed passages of this canonical biblical text, one of my primary aims being to identify traces of the artists' thinking in their work. In uncovering reflections within the medieval artist's work on the relationship between it and divine creation, I will contextualize the work with the help of philosophical thinking on creation and formation that was recorded in written sources by scholars living and working at the time. I will then expand the discussion to consider how Western medieval artists, in creating original illuminations and experimenting with new representational modes, suggest potential analogies between their own work, God's acts of creation, and nature's generative force.

In his analysis of Dürer's unique self-portrait alluding to Christ, Joseph Leo Koerner looks to the writings of Nicolaus Cusanus as a window on late medieval conceptions of the *imago*. Koerner observes that, "at the moment when an artist

13 Weinryb, "Material and Making"; Weinryb, *The Bronze Object*; Weinryb, "Living Matter"; Reudenbach, "Werkkünste und Künstlerkonzept"; Castelnuovo, "Dedalo e Bezeleel." Also Frings, "Dosso Dossis Allegorie."

14 Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*; Weis, "Der römische Schöpfungszyklus." For an excellent discussion and critical revision of art-historical approaches to the reception of the so-called Roman type and of the *Codex Cottonianus* see the contributions in Büchsel, *The Atrium of San Marco*.

15 Nees, "The Originality of Early Medieval Artists," 89, argues that to "find the conscious significant originality of the early medieval artist it is necessary to go beyond mere individuality." He suggests that we need to "consider three questions, the degree of novelty with respect to what may be termed either a living tradition or a particular prototype or model, the degree to which any perceived novelty appears to stem from deliberate action as opposed to mistakes, misunderstandings, deficiencies, or the inevitable workings of training and other such factors, and finally most difficult, whether any residual deliberate novelty found to exist constituted a valued and significant aspect of the work of art in the opinion of its maker and/or its audience."

16 Schapiro, *Romanesque Art*; Camille, *Image on the Edge*.

asserts that he not only imitates the natural, God-created world but also produces something totally new, he elevates himself from the secondary status as image of God to become truly another god, an *alter deus*.¹⁷ Similarly, this book's focus is on implicit references in late medieval illuminations of Genesis to an analogous relationship between divine and natural acts of creation, a relationship revealed in the works themselves.

The perils involved in balancing the thin line we can discern in the act to create a work of art, an act that imitates the Divine Creator – between use of the gift of being created according to divine likeness and the hubris bringing the artist close to the fallen angels – are a meaningful component of the laborious search for and definition of the artist's self.¹⁸ During the centuries between Thomas Aquinas and Cusanus an important shift took place within texts – from drawing an implicit analogy between the divine and human *artifex* to drawing an explicit one. In the existing literature, this shift in thinking has been considered as a threshold that medieval visual artists never crossed.¹⁹ I argue, however, that they did, albeit implicitly and often in a speculative mode – beginning at the latest in the twelfth century with Godfrey of Saint Victor as author and Hildebert/Everwinus as illuminator, to name just two examples.²⁰

Furthermore, crossing this threshold entailed probing the image's power as a *vis specularem*, to use Cusanus's term. At the end of his important treatise, *De visione dei*, the philosopher draws the analogy, this time even more concretely, between God – creator of the cosmos – and the artist: "As if a painter, mixing different colors, to create a likeness, in which his *ars* can rest and he (and we) can take delight [*delicietur*]."²¹ According to Karl Jaspers, Cusanus is "speaking allegorically,

17 Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, 138.

18 Important studies of medieval artists have analyzed their working conditions and practices, their training and status, and self-referential aspects of the inscriptions. See Bredekamp, "Das Mittelalter als Epoche der Individualität"; Bredekamp, "Die Ich-Werdung des Werkes im Mittelalter"; Burg, *Die Signatur*; Cassagnes-Brouquet, "Les ateliers d'artistes au Moyen Âge"; Claussen, "Autorschaft als Egotrip"; Claussen, "Früher Künstlerstolz"; Claussen, "Künstlerinschriften"; Claussen, "Nachrichten von den Antipoden"; Diel, *Die Sprache der Signatur*; Dodwell, *Aspects of Art of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, 153–171; Donato, *Le opere e i nomi*; Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work*; Erlande-Brandenburg, *Le sacre de l'artiste*; Gludovatz, *Fährten legen*; Hindman, "The Roles of Author and Artist"; Joubert, *L'artiste et le clerc*; Legner, *Artifex*; Martindale, *The Rise of the Artist*; Muratova, "Vir quidem fallax et falsidicus"; Schüssler, "Der symbolische Buchstabe"; Trinks, "Der Künstler im Zeichen des Kreuzes."

19 Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*, 8, observes that, "though medieval artists occasionally drew analogies between the *deus artifex* and the *artifex* as such, they shied away from characterizing their own creative powers as 'divine.'" For the Renaissance see Emison, *Creating the "Divine" Artist*.

20 See Claussen, "Autorschaft als Egotrip," with an overview of the scholarship.

21 Levao, *Renaissance Minds and Their Fictions*, 390–391, n. 13 indicates that the color mixing is "clearly a humanely imagined metaphor for God, a conjecture based on the icon itself." He draws attention to a parallel in Cusanus's *De docta ignorantia*, "when Cusanus, alluding to The Wisdom of Solomon 11:21,

momentarily putting the imitative human mind in the place of the original.”²² Cusanus draws comparisons between the Divine Creator, the generative forces in nature, and human creativity; or, to be precise, between the spirit, the sun’s gaze, and the intellect.²³ In making these comparisons, he pays particular attention to the role of *prima materia*, a term that Aristotelian thought had introduced into discussions of creation.²⁴

Like artists depicting acts of creation in his time, Cusanus is deeply indebted to long-standing, widespread, and controversial discussions of the Book of Genesis and its reception in encyclopedic tracts including accounts of the world’s origin and in theological commentaries. To identify and understand the slight but significant shifts in these discussions, as well as the implicit references to them in Western medieval miniatures, we need to consider the conceptual impulses informing both Aquinas’s and Cusanus’s historical eras.²⁵ If we wish to understand how this transition unfolded for medieval artists and gain a sense of the challenges they faced, we must look closely at the creations themselves. In this context, it is important to

justifies man as a measurer through God’s use, in creation of ‘arithmetic, geometry, music, and likewise astronomy’ (2.13).”

22 Jaspers, *Anselm and Nicholas of Cusa*, 72; Mandrella, “Nikolaus von Kues”; Krämer, *Kritisches Verzeichnis*; Stork, “Bibliothek und Bücher des Nikolaus von Kues.”

23 See Cusanus, *De visione dei*, 116: “The power of the sun descends into the vegetative spirit and moves it, so that it is perfected; and by the most pleasing and most natural warming from the celestial heat, good fruit is produced by means of a good tree. Similarly, O God, Your Spirit comes into the intellectual spirit of a good man and warms the potential power by the heat of divine love, so that the intellectual spirit is perfected and so that there is produced fruit that is most pleasing to the Spirit.”

24 The connective forces acting between the three creative actors are the spirit, the sun’s gaze, and the intellect. Cusanus, *De visione dei*, 317: “Therefore, my God, when You seem to me as if You were formable prime matter [*prima materia*], because You receive the form of each one who looks unto You, You elevate me, so that I discern the following: viz., that the one who looks unto You does not bestow form upon You; rather, he beholds himself in You, because he receives from You that which he is. And so, that which You seem to receive from the one who looks unto You – this You bestow, as if You were a living Mirror-of- eternity [*speculum aeternitatis vivum*], which is the Form of forms. When someone looks into this Mirror, he sees his own form in the Form of forms, which the Mirror is. And he judges the form seen in the Mirror to be the image of his own form, because such would be the case with regard to a polished material mirror. However, the contrary thereof is true, because in the Mirror of eternity that which he sees is not an image but is the Truth, of which the beholder is the image [*cuius ipse videns est figura*]. Therefore, in You, my God, the image is the Truth and Exemplar of each and every thing that exists or can exist.”

25 Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 588–594, rejects the assumption of an epochal break between the Middle Ages and the modern period. Cusanus is one of the examples he draws on to argue that the transition to modern conceptions of God, humanity, and the cosmos was not a sudden change brought about by a single event, but the result of a complex series of events weaving together Scholasticism, the Scientific Revolution, and, eventually, the Enlightenment. For Blumenberg, Cusanus’s contribution to science is wholly consistent with views emerging in medieval theology. See also McKnight, “Legitimacy of the Modern Age,” 184.

examine a process of incremental creative advancement, paying particular attention to embedded expressions of self-reflection. We need to make the works speak, which involves returning to the primary sources and commentaries the artists knew and sometimes illuminated as such contextualizing is key to appreciating the stakes involved in the individual creative decisions these artists made.

As we will see in the following chapters, what takes place in the period between the twelfth century and Cusanus's death in 1464 is nothing less than the emergence of a self-reflexive understanding of artistic practice, an understanding that emerges in the depiction of divine and natural acts of creation. This is an important and largely neglected historical development, one culminating in the Renaissance idea of the genius, the divine artist. That idea would be cemented in Vasari's hagiographic presentation of artists' lives, where it would gain the status of a foundational credo in the history of art.

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1. Creator and Artist

Abstract: A manuscript containing Augustine's *De civitate Dei/City of God* (Ms. A. XXI) unfolds in a witty self-portrait of Hildebert, a pictorial parable about the notions of *ars* and *opus*. Augustine laid the groundwork for the idea that both artist and creativity are rooted in the creation of humans in God's likeness, emphasized in the account of Genesis. Hildebert's self-portrait within this text reveals a reflection on Augustine's ideas about craftsmanship, and suggests reading the image as a contemplation of the relationship between human and divine *artifex*. The discussion of the Junius/Cædmon Manuscript illustrating the creation of the cosmos and the story of Adam and Eve elucidates the challenge of including the creation of the cosmos in pictorial cycles of the Genesis account.

Keywords: *City of God*/Augustine, *artifex/opifex*, Genesis account, Junius/Cædmon Manuscript, human creation

Now reason has a twofold act:
one is its proper act in respect of its proper object,
and this is the act of knowing the truth;
the other is the act of reason as directing the other powers.¹
(Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*)

In the medieval period, one of the most influential and widely received texts commenting on Genesis was Augustine's *De civitate Dei (City of God)*, an essential text for the exegesis of Genesis throughout the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and early modernity. Through an elaborate discussion of the need to distinguish between good and evil, Augustine also laid the groundwork for a view of the artist and the artist's creative capacity as grounded in the human creation in God's image, emphasized in the account of Genesis. The insertion of a humble and witty self-portrait of Hildebert and his aide Everwinus into a twelfth-century manuscript

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II quest. 74, art. 5: "Habet autem ratio duplicem actum, unum quidem secundum se, in comparatione ad proprium obiectum, quod est cognoscere aliquod verum; alius autem actus rationis est in quantum est directiva aliarum virium."

of this text reveals a reflection on Augustine's ideas about craftsmanship, and invites us to also read the image as a broader contemplation on the relationship between human and divine *artifex*.

For Augustine, three elements are foundational for human craftsmen (artifices) – *natura*, *doctrina*, and *usus*. The first of these elements originates in nature (*ingenium*), the second can be acquired through learning (*scientia*), and the third is the fruit of judgment and decision-making (*fructu diiudicandus*).² Augustine sees these elements as intrinsically related to the battle between virtue and vice. Reading the self-portrait together with Augustine's text reveals an interior battle between the vices of pride and anger and the virtues of humility and clemency within the artist's self-conception. Technical and paleographic analysis has confirmed that the same ink was used for writing Augustine's text and the text in the illumination. They were therefore very likely executed by the same person.

This unique self-portrait is located at the very end of the first of two volumes of Augustine's treatise (fig. 1.1). These volumes – the first containing the initial eleven books of the treatise and the second the remaining books – were produced by Rhenish scribes and illuminators Hildebert and Everwinus for the bishop of Olmütz, Heinrich Sdik, around the mid twelfth century as a gift for the monastery in Strahov. The manuscript mainly reveals quite typical elements, following the standards of Romanesque book production, with use of ornamental initials. However, it also includes an illumination depicting the artist and scribe, which is exceptional in containing and exposing some aspects of the illuminator's self-understanding. The parchment is of superb quality – 153 folios were used for the first volume and 196 for the second – and the writing is meticulous. Each of the treatise's twenty-two books begins with a decorated initial. In the first volume we also encounter figurative depictions at the beginning and the end (fig. 1.1 and fig. 1.2). Embedded in the vine thicket of the first initial is the author, Augustine, with a feather quill (fig. 1.2). To his right, his friend Marcellin holds the scroll's other end, inscribed with a praise to the opus, *Gloriosissimam civitatem dei*.

This is a rather conventional self-portrait.³ What is original has been added at the volume's very end, after book eleven. The opened pages of a depicted book reveal the anger raging in the scribe's heart: "Miserable mouse! More and more often you provoke my anger, God should destroy you."⁴ Here, on the manuscript's last page, the illuminator and scribe has depicted himself together with his aide as both full of irony and a humble servant (fig. 1.1). Hildebert's right hand is raised, clenching

2 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, lib. XI, cap. XXV: "Tria etiam sunt, quae in unoquoque homine artifice spectantur, ut aliquid efficiat: natura, doctrina, usus; natura ingenio, doctrina scientia, usus fructu diiudicandus est."

3 Legner, *Illustres manus*, 259–261.

4 "Pessime mus sepius me provocas ad iram ut te deus perdat."

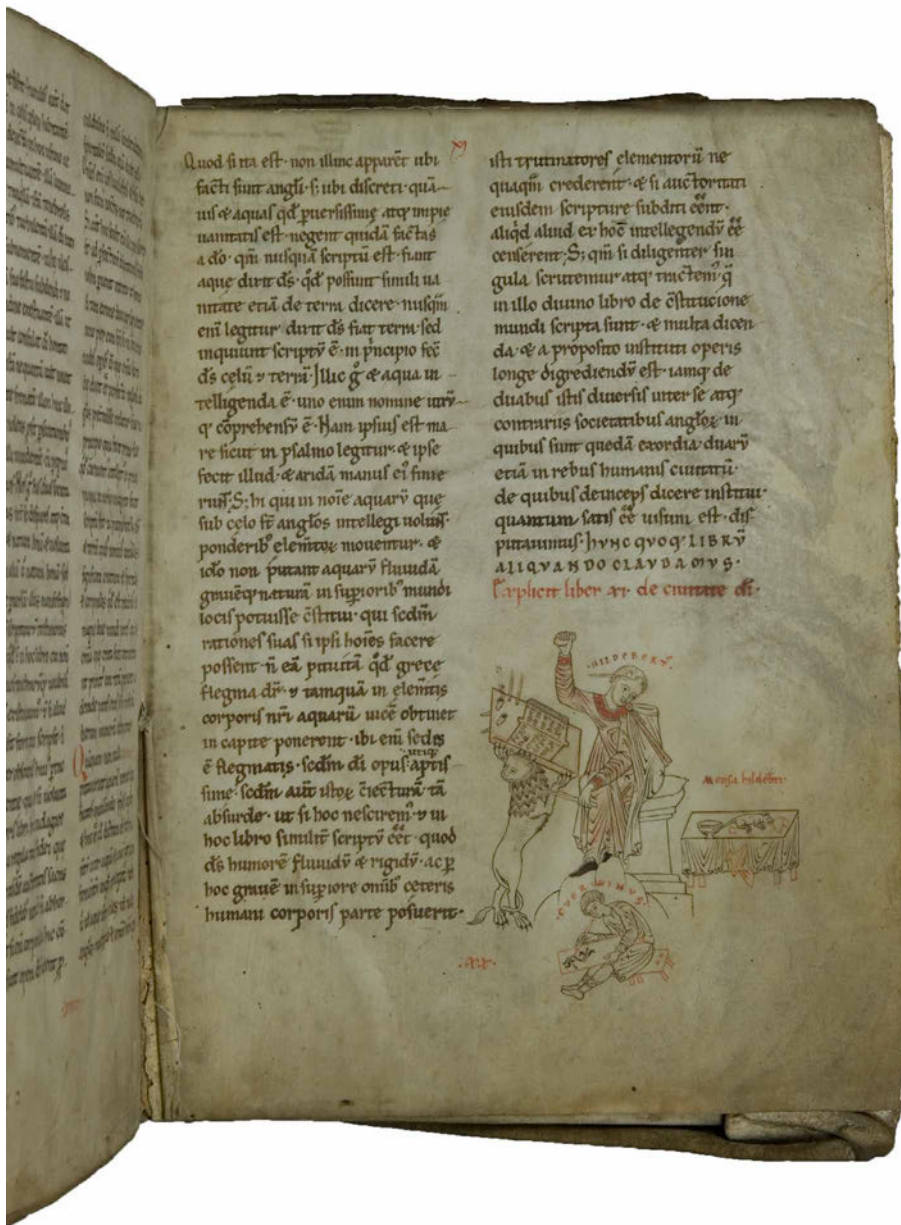


Fig. 1.1 Hildebert and Everwinus in their workshop. Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, Ms. A. XXI/r, fol. 153r, Olomóc (Czech Republic), ca. 1140, parchment, 25.2 × 23.5 cm, Prague, Hradu, Knihovna pražské metropolitní kapituly.

what is most likely a pumice stone. He is about to throw it to his left, at a hungry intruder, a rat or or large mouse exploring the workshop of the two collaborators in search of food. The rodent has just knocked over a bowl on Hildebert's table.



Fig. 1.2 Augustine and Marcellinus, G-Initial. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Ms. A. XXI/r, fol. 1r, Olomóc (Czech Republic), ca. 1140, parchment, 25.2 × 23.5 cm, Prague, Hradu, Knihovna pražské metropolitní kapituly.

While it sniffs at a large piece of cheese, a roast chicken is about to hit the floor. Hildebert's colleague Everwinus has not yet realized what is going on behind his back, though a second later the sound of the vessel crashing to the floor will alert him. At this particular moment, sitting on a modest stool, he is fully immersed in

drawing a splendid ornament. His position, posture, and attire form a stark contrast to Hildebert above him.

Hildebert is about to erase something on the parchment, as indicated by the pumice, the knife in his left hand, and the quill tucked behind his right ear. He is seated on a comfortable pillow placed on a lavish throne, and the table of food is clearly marked as belonging to him (*mensa Hildeberti*). His splendid desk is formed by a standing lion, and the open book shows a few words written in black on a red background. Two horns are inserted in the holes on the desk's upper edge, with two quills tucked in two holes at the right edge and a rabbit's foot alongside.⁵ The two animals (rat and lion) and the two humans are paired in significant opposition. The lion's tail is wrapped around and between his legs as if afraid of the fearless rodent and wishing to run and hide. The scribe Hildebert, seated on the throne, is filled with anger, while the lay painter, Erwinus, on a stool and stooped over his hand-held board, is joyfully devoting himself to an ornament's perfect form.⁶ However we must be careful not to ascribe the roles of scribe and illuminator too quickly. It is possible that Hildebert is indeed the scribe and Everwinus the illuminator; but it could just as easily be the other way round, with Hildebert the illuminator depicting himself as a scribe.

Another manuscript from the same scriptorium (fig. 1.3) also depicts both Hildebert and Everwinus, but with their functions clearly defined through inscriptions: *H* = Hildebert as painter (*pictor*) and Everwinus faithfully assisting him with an offering of two small vessels of fresh paint. On the left-hand side is another (unnamed) cleric, described as a "scribe" (*scriptor*). So, either, the roles of scribe and illuminator were changing from manuscript to manuscript or the illumination in the manuscript with Augustine's *City of God* reveals a humoristic interpretation of his role. This latter depiction of Hildebert, the illuminator, serves as an iconic representation of artistic labor. Horst Bredekamp describes the scene as a strikingly ironic self-portrait, and Anton Legner as a "just finished self-portrait displaying the illuminator's expectation for salvation."⁷

5 Löhner, "Hildebertus," 26.

6 Ibid.; Rehm, "Lieber Brot als Mäuse." While we may at first presume that Hildebert is actually the scribe and Everwinus the illuminator of the manuscript, comparison with another depiction of the same collaborators in the frontispiece of another manuscript (Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Cod. A 144) shows Hildebert with the inscription "H. PICTOR" opposite a monk, labeled as "R. S(cript)o," and Everwinus again holding two pots of ink assisting Hildebert.

7 For a list of interpretations viewing the scene as a humoristic note, see Rehm, "Lieber Brot als Mäuse," 3, n. 6; Bredekamp, "Das Mittelalter als Epoche der Individualität," 196–201; and Legner, *Artifex*, 188–190. See Augustine, *City of God*, book XI, ch. 16: "Who, would not rather have bread in his house than mice, gold than fleas?" (translation by Marcus Dods).

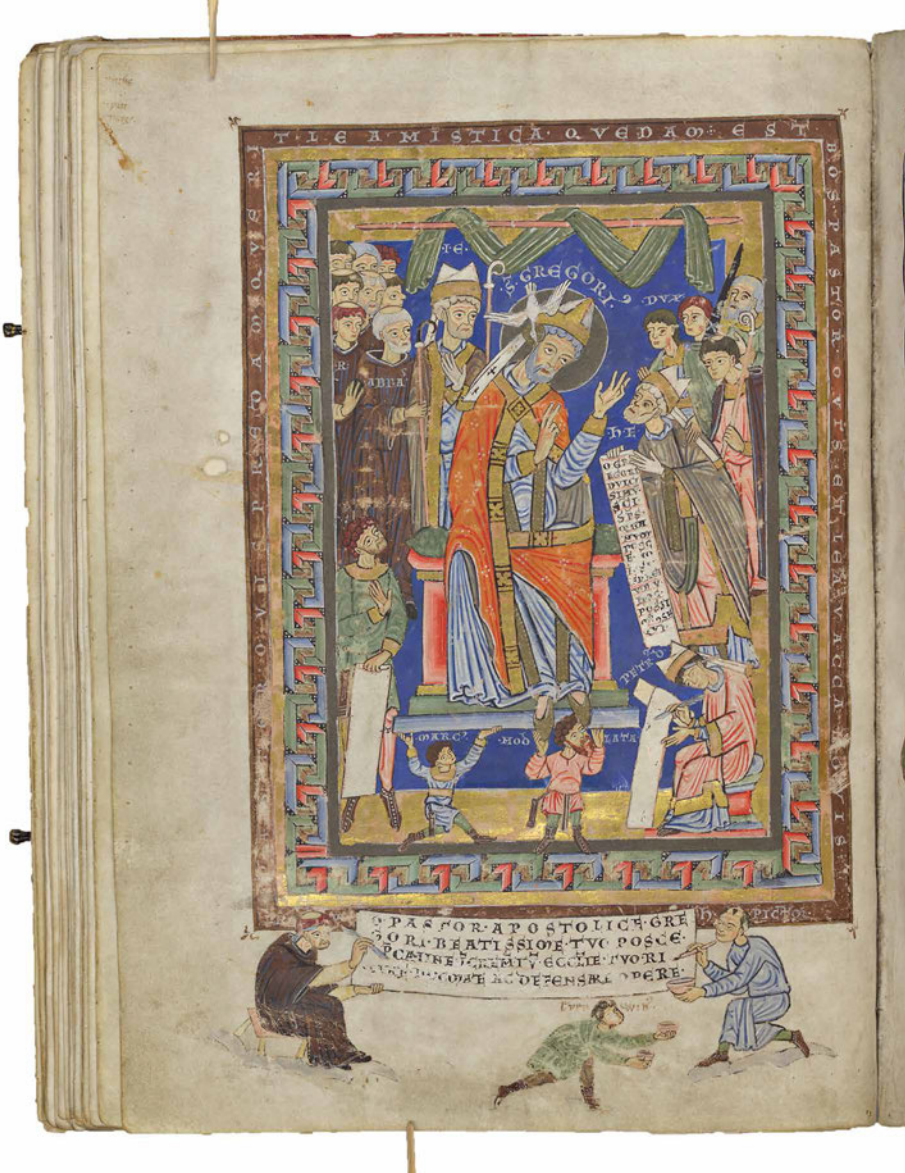


Fig. 1.3 St. Gregory, *Horologium Olomucense*, Cod. A 144, fol. 34v, Olomóc (Czech Republic), ca. 1140, parchment, 28 × 21 cm, Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket.

This miniature in the manuscript with *City of God* offers a depiction of the artist, coming right after key passages in Augustine's reading of artifice in Genesis (see fig. 1.1). As mentioned, I believe that both the position and content of this illumination suggest the artist grappling with the nature of his work. Medieval artists did not

use signatures to claim authorship of their creations, instead inscribing themselves in curious, often ironic ways. How can we then reveal what they have read and thought, uncovering the implicit thoughts embedded in their creations in order to start understanding the medieval notion of artistic production?

As suggested, I think this scene invites interpretation as a humble reflection by illuminator and scribe on acts of creation – including their act of making and illuminating a manuscript. Here we should first take account of the illumination's position in Augustine's *City of God*.⁸ By considering the miniature's context and defining what precisely is original or new within it, while keeping in mind the analogies and differences between divine and human acts of creation, we can arrive at a better understanding of medieval ideas about illuminating manuscripts – in both meanings of the term: first, the making of a miniature in a manuscript; and, second, the wisdom and knowledge necessary to do this that is embedded in the work and reveals itself through the work. The latter is what is explicitly addressed as “theory” in manuals on making miniatures. The following quote stems from the Bern treatise *De clarea*, in which an illuminator describes in great detail how to produce specific colors for the practice of manuscript illumination (fig. 1.4). The anonymous author emphasizes the necessary conjunction of artistic practice, invention, and cognition, as well as the divine origin of the human ability to create:

A craftsman [*artifex*] considers himself not as capable [*valentem*] in his works [*opere*] if he is not trying [*probat*] something through his gift and understands [*intelligit*] only what he has learned from others. All craft [*ars*] was invented by the searching mind of men and realized, while God, through whom everything exists, has given them [the required] wisdom [*sapientiam*].⁹

Granted the author's claim that divine gift and human knowledge are both necessary for acts of artistic creation holds true to a certain extent, I would like to argue for amending the reading of our illumination, with its mouse and scribe's anger, offered by Ulrich Rehm, who sees certain pictorial components as references to the contents of the eleventh book of *De civitate Dei* that precedes it. Rehm has already suggested interpreting the illumination as an expression of the artist's obligation to exercise *humilitas* and act as a model, an *exemplum*. For Rehm, this constitutes an admonition not to let vice prevail in the battle between vice and virtue that is

8 Rehm, “Lieber Brot als Mäuse,” 2.

9 Lat. Ms. Cod. A 91.17, Burgerbibliothek Bern, *De clarea*: “Non valentem se existimat artifex in opere, si ex proprio ingenio nec probat nec intelligit quicquam, tantummodo hoc, quod per alios didicerat. Omnis igitur est inventa intellectaque a scrutantibus hominum sensibus ars, sapientiam hominibus donante Deo per quem omnia constant” (translation by the author). Thompson, “The ‘De clarea,’” dates the manual to the twelfth century, and Hagen before 1100 (English translation by Frank Bezner).

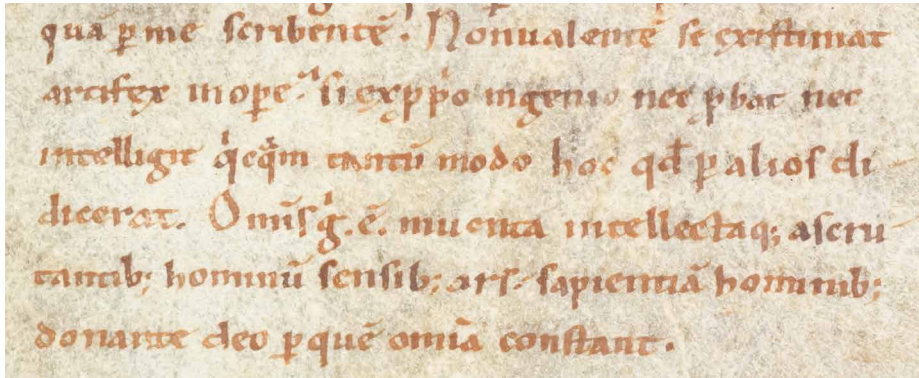


Fig. 1.4 Anonymus Bernensis, *De clarea* treatise, Cod. A 91.17, fols. 1r–5v (here fol. 5r), Fleury (France), second half of 11th century, parchment, 16 × 11.5 cm, Bern, Burgerbibliothek.

so central to Augustine. In winning this battle, we will come closer to God, which is to say reach a certain likeness of the Creator. In Rehm's view, the furious scribe is a metaphor for rage – *ira* – cursing at part of the divine creation.

This moral reading adds an important dimension to our understanding of the miniature. However, it neglects the artist's play with ambivalence and reference to the work's potential for mimesis of divine acts of creation. Instead, we can go a step further: the book preceding the illumination discusses how to understand and access divine creation, or how the largest ideas can be grasped through the smallest hint. This textual context – coupled with the fact that the eleventh book is one of the few passages in a medieval text where *ars/opus*, *artifex/opifex*, and *artificium/opificium* are mutually distinguished in a purposeful and meaningful way – calls upon us to read the miniature not only as a self-portrait but also as a reflection on the relationship between human and divine *artifex*.¹⁰

Let us look more closely at the lines that precede the image. Augustine repeatedly addresses the importance of imagination in understanding God's creation and, moreover, how artists could understand the deeper dimensions of these divine creative acts through their own.¹¹ After a passage about the Trinity, Augustine describes the necessity of the *bad* for cognition of the *good*. It is here that he offers the astonishing comparison with the human *artifex*: the painter must use dark colors, even though they unfold their effect only when used in the right place; likewise, in order to understand the truth in things, one must understand vice as well as

10 With the term "self-portrait" I am not referring here to an expression of an individual self but to a picture showing the artist who made it. For the distinction between medieval and early modern notions of the self-portrait see Schweikhart, "Vom Signaturbildnis."

11 Augustine, *City of God*, book XI, chap. 2.

beauty. The saint then addresses three elements foundational for the work of human artifice – *natura (ingenium)*, *doctrina (scientia)*, and *usus (fructu diiudicandus)*.¹² He emphasizes that, since human beings are “made in God’s image,” they can succeed in battling the vices and rise “above those lower parts he has in common with the beasts, which brings him nearer to the Supreme.”¹³ Augustine also suggests that we overcome our inclinations to see flaws, vices, and so on as the devil’s work because they are still a part of divine creation and embody the challenge of understanding the truth behind the visible: “This is the beginning of God’s creations [*figmenti domini*]...And because God, when He created [mankind], was certainly not ignorant of his future malignity, and foresaw the good which He Himself would bring out of his evil.”¹⁴ According to Augustine, only because we are created in God’s image are we capable of using these gifts of *ingenium* and cognition. He then discusses images in our mind (*imagines simillimas*) and our fantasies (*fantasiae*).¹⁵

Last but not least, he speaks of the two types of knowledge we have, the clear and the obscure.¹⁶ At this – for us decisive – point he introduces the opposition of *ars* and *opus*. Relevant for Augustine is less the design, the form, of the work than how close it comes to truth, and thus to providing insight or true cognition. He compares recognizing from a crafted form the idea according to which it was created to the cognition of truth. In doing so, he contrasts visual perception with mental cognition. Accordingly, he compares the perception and cognition of the work with the knowledge needed to produce it: that knowledge is greater than what we can derive from the work itself by perceiving it either visually or through mental cognition. In and through artistic labor and acts of artistic invention, we admire the Divine Creator. The work of making an image is more meaningful than its contemplation or whatever the image might do once created. Having laid this groundwork, the eleventh book closes with a discussion of Genesis, the six days of creation, and the creation of the angels.

With these thoughts in mind, let us return to our miniature. Even the smallest details – the hungry rodent, the composition of two pairs of humans and animals and two types of labor, the small ornamental detailing – speak to the wisdom of the world’s divine designer.¹⁷ This *mise-en-scène* is a hint of what both the Divine

12 “Tria etiam sunt quae in unoquoque homine artifice spectantur, ut aliquid efficiat: natura, doctrina, usus; natura ingenio, doctrina scientia, usus fructu diiudicandus est.”

13 Augustine, *City of God*, book XI, chap. 2.

14 *Ibid.*, book XI, chap. 17 (translation modified).

15 *Ibid.*, book XI, chap. 2.

16 “illa clariore, hac obscuriore cognitione, velut artis atque operum; quae tamen opera cum ad ipsius Creatoris laudem.”

17 Augustine, *City of God*, book XI, chap. 22: “Now God is in such sort a great worker in great things, that He is not less in little things, for these little things are to be measured not by their own greatness

Creator and a human artist have in mind when creating external characteristics. Learning how to move deeper offers access to the ideas and processes behind both the world's creation and that of a work of art. But the notion of art this implies is not the same as the mere representation of an abstract idea. What we need to grasp if we are to consider the ambivalent nature of this image in its own terms is the implicit reference to Augustine's ideas about creation and their relationship to human craftsmanship.

De civitate Dei is the text from late antiquity that most explicitly refers to the terms *artifex* and *opifex* as well as *ars* and *opus*. Artistic labor here not only receives legitimization but is also described as a particularly apt way to understand God, with cognition of divine truth being one of its primary purposes.¹⁸ Against this backdrop, we can understand the miniature as one of the few illuminated manuscripts using Augustine's text as what Germans call *Denkbild* – a figure of thought. In composing and making this picture, the artist reflected on human and divine *artifex* in dialogue with Augustine's teaching.¹⁹

Ars and Opus

Human beings can create because they are created in the likeness of God. This was the prevailing approach to explaining artistic labor until the twelfth century, its basis being the idea of created nature and creating/creative nature (*natura naturata*), postulating that all creation, even that occurring after the creation of the cosmos, is part of an original divine plan.²⁰ An alternative explanation originates in the idea of creating nature (*natura naturans*) introduced by the polymath Michael Scot (d. ca. 1232), who translated Aristotelian and Arabic treatises while residing in twelfth-century Toledo.²¹ This idea of nature, intended to make comprehensible the existence of bad and even evil things in the world, postulates

(which does not exist), but by the wisdom of their Designer; as, in the visible appearance of a man, if one eyebrow be shaved off, how nearly nothing is taken from the body, but how much from the beauty! – for that is not constituted by bulk, but by the proportion and arrangement of the members.”

18 Rehm, “Lieber Brot als Mäuse.”

19 See Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, lib. XI, cap. XXI–XXIII. XXI.

20 See Ingham, *The Medieval New*; Newman, *Promethian Ambitions*; Emison, *Creating the “Divine” Artist*; Kruse, *Wozu Menschen malen*.

21 See Pick, “Michael Scot in Toledo.” The opposition between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* is mostly associated with Spinoza, who elaborated on this concept in the *Ethics*, and Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) in his *De la causa, principio et uno* (*On Cause, Principle, and Unity* (1584)). But it was Scot who first used the terms and defined the contrast between the terms: in the scholastic period, his usage was most prominently reflected in Alain de Lille's *Anticlaudian*.

the presence in nature of generative forces disconnecting its creations from a concrete divine plan.²²

It seems to me that, in developing the opposition between the ideas of *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*, Scot may have been following Dominicus Gundissalinus (d. after 1190), a philosopher and fellow translator working in Toledo, who, in treating related issues, used the opposing terms *creata* and *creans* in his commentary on the *Liber de causis*, a text quickly taken up for teaching in scholastic schools.²³ In the medieval period it was attributed to Aristotle but its authorship is now considered unknown. Building on these ideas, Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) and Francesco da Barberino (1264–1348) were to offer their own deliberations on whether human beings, as part of nature, could themselves be creative outside a predetermined divine plan.

However, there is neither a common word for creativity nor originality in medieval Latin; nor is human creativity itself addressed explicitly until Nicolaus Cusanus, whose ideas are indebted to those of Aquinas.²⁴ Nonetheless, the question of how human and divine acts of creation are related was already being explored well before Cusanus, by theologians such as Hugo of Saint Victor (d. 1141) and Petrus Comestor

22 Weijers, “Contribution à l’histoire des termes ‘natura naturans’ et ‘natura naturata,’” 70 suggests that Michael Scot “invented the phrase *natura naturans*, based on the evidence of a passage from his LI which explains that even when the stars work against a man and a woman conceiving a child, God can make it happen, ‘Since God is *natura naturans* and, so, above *natura naturata*.’” See also Pick, “Michael Scot in Toledo,” 111, who observes that “most subsequent thirteenth-century authors would use the term *natura naturata* differently from the way Michael Scot uses it. For them *natura naturata* is equivalent to God as it is in Michael’s formulation, but *natura naturata* is simply a synonym for everything created, all of which is beneath God.”

23 Dominicus Gundissalinus, *Liber de causis*, 118: “Sed hec eternitas est creans non creata quoniam non mensurantur hac mensura aliqua nis per virtutem divinam que est in ea.” Ibid., 127: “Debes et scire quod vita creans et non creata est ratio spiritualis in sapientia.” For a detailed discussion of the translation’s attribution to either Gerard of Cremona or Dominicus Gundalissinus, see Talyer, “Analysis,” 28; Fidora, “Le débat sur la creation.”

24 Nikolaus von Kues [Nicolaus Cusanus], *De Beryllo*, 70; 4: “Intellectus enim si in se habuerit artem, quae est creativa vitae et laetitiae sempiternae, ultimam est assecutus scientiam et felicitatem.” Von Kues, *Idiota de mente*, 13, 16: “Concipe igitur absolutam artem creativam per se subsistentem, ut ars sit artifex et magisterium magister.” While, like Thomas, Cusanus often uses the adjective *creativus* in the context of the ability to understand and gain true insight (like Aquinas), he goes a step further. He mostly explicitly relates human to divine creativity in the “Trialogus de possess,” 8, 11: “Nam certum est nullam creaturam esse actu omne id quod esse potest, cum dei potentia creativa non sit evacuata in ipsius creatione, quin possit de lapide suscitare hominem et adicere seu diminuere cuiusque quantitatem et generaliter omnem creaturam in aliam et aliam vertere.” See also *ibid.*, 34, 1: “Sicuti aliqua in hoc mundo medio humanae artis fieri videmus per eos, qui artem habent in anima sua studio acquisitam, ita quod ars est in ipsis recepta et manens et verbum docens et imperans ea quae artis sunt, sic et ars divina, quae firmissima fide acquisita est in spiritu nostro, est verbum dei docens et imperans ea quae artis creativae et omnipotentis existunt.”

(d. 1178) as well as Vincent of Beauvais (d. 1264), a contemporary of Aquinas – in each case in the context of a discussion of Genesis.²⁵ Medieval artists' manuals likewise refer to the relationship between divine creation and human craft. Both Theophilus Presbyter, in the three prologues of the *Schedula*, and the anonymous author of the *De clarea* treatise explain that the human ability to create originates in the divine likeness spelled out in Genesis 1:26. But, significantly, neither text makes use of the verb *creare* (create); instead, divine creation is the point of reference for craftsmanship in both.²⁶

Medieval thought on acts of creation and *ars* was crucially shaped by four of Aristotle's texts: *On Metaphysics*, *On Generation and Corruption*, *On Heaven*, and *On the Soul*. But, until the Dominican scholar William of Moerbeke (d. 1286) translated several of Aristotle's texts directly from Greek into Latin, the available texts or text fragments were relatively unreliable. In many cases they were translations of translations, such as of *On Generation and Corruption* by Gerard of Cremona (d. 1187) and Burgundio of Pisa (d. 1193) from Arabic, as well as the *translatio vetus* of this tract by an unknown scholar before 1150.²⁷ Then, in the late thirteenth century, when Moerbeke's *translatio nova* of *On Generation and Corruption* (itself a revision of Burgundio's translation) began to circulate, *creatio ex nihilo*, *quinta essentia*, and *prima materia* became key terms in discussions on divine and natural acts of creation.²⁸

25 For the acts of creation discussed in the works of Hugo of St. Victor, Petrus Comestor, and Vincent of Beauvais see Zahlten, *Creatio Mundi*. For the medieval debates in general see Newman, *Promethean Ambitions*; Ruffer, *Werkprozess*.

26 Theophilus, *De diversis artibus*, prologus libri primi: "Legimus in exordio mundanae creationis hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei conditum et inspiratione diuini spiraculi animatum, tantaque dignitatis excellentia caeteris animantibus praerogatum, ut rationis capax diuinae prudentiae consilii ingeniique mereret participium, arbitriique libertate donatus solius Conditoris sui susciperet uoluntatem et reueretur imperium." In the third prologue we also find "Quapropter, fili dilectissime, non cuncteris, sed plena fide crede spiritum Dei cor tuum implere, cum eius ornasti domum tanto decore tantaque operum uarietate. Et ne forte diffidas, pandam euidenti ratione, quicquid discere intelligere uel excogitare possis artium, septiformis Spiritus gratiam tibi ministrare. Per spiritum sapientiae cognoscis a Deo cuncta creata procedere, et sine ipso nihil esse. Per spiritum intellectus cepisti capacitatem ingenii, quo ordine qua uarietate qua mensura ualeas insistere diuerso operi tuo. Per spiritum consilii talentum a Deo tibi concessum non abscondis, sed cum humilitate palam operando et docendo cognoscere cupientibus fideliter ostendis. Per spiritum fortitudinis omnem segnitiei torporem excutis, et quicquid non lento conamine incipis, plenis uiribus ad effectum perducis. Per spiritum scientiae tibi concessum ex abundanti corde dominaris ingenio, et quo perfecte abundas plenae mentis audacia uteris in publico. Per spiritum pietatis quid, cui, quando, quantum, uel qualiter operis, et ne subrepat auaritia seu cupiditatis uitium, mercedis pretium pia consideratione moderaris. Per spiritum timoris Domini te nihil ex te posse consideras, nihil inconcessum a Deo te habere seu uelle cogitas, sed credendo confitendo et gratias agendo, quicquid nosti uel es aut esse potes, diuinae misericordiae reputas."

27 Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, 194. Burgundio of Pisa also translated several important medical texts, including Galen's *De complexionibus alias De temperamentis*.

28 One of the most important relevant texts was Michael Scot's Latin translation of Averroes's commentary on *De generatione et corruptione*. See Averroes (Averrois Cordubensis), *Commentarium medium in Aristotelis*

At the same time as new ideas such as *natura naturans* entered scholastic debates, the twelfth-century Aristotle translations, with their late antique and Arabic commentaries, introduced the Aristotelian concepts of “prime mover” and “prime matter.”²⁹ Aristotle distinguishes between forms of motion contrary to nature and forms that move according to it. His famous concept of the “unmoved mover,” which was translated into Latin as *primum movens*, presents a supra-physical entity without which the universe could not function or persist. A related concept attributed to Aristotle by Augustine, Aquinas, and others was that of prime matter, from which the (four) elements were created, understood as pure potentiality. Prime matter was considered the counterpart to the pure actuality of unmoved movers.³⁰

Starting in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, Aristotle’s work on natural philosophy was the subject of lectures in the arts faculties of European universities, and, by the end of the thirteenth century, these texts had become firmly established.³¹ In the 1270s, these new ideas about the creation of the world, the generation of life, and the animation of the heavens provoked a clash between progressive and orthodox thinkers at the University of Paris. The volatile situation registered strongly with the church authorities, and, in 1277 Bishop Étienne Tempier (d. 1279) – perhaps (but possibly not) following a papal initiative – condemned no less than 219 propositions influenced by Aristotle.³² After Tempier’s condemnation, many progressive scholars had to leave Paris, although they would continue their work at universities and monasteries all over Europe. Remarkably, the impact of these exiled scholars on art and artworks has remained largely unexplored.

De generatione et corruptione; Dod, “Aristoteles latinus,” 58–59. The earliest Western commentary was probably written by Alfred Sareshel. See Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, ed. Judycka, XLIXf. See also Ricklin, *Der Traum der Philosophie*, 362–366; Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, trans. Buchheim, 195, n. 382, with further literature.

29 Jolivet, “The Arabic Inheritance”; Grebner and Fried, *Kulturtransfer und Hofgesellschaft im Mittelalter*; Davidson, “Dreaming in Class”; Williams, “Aristotle in the Medieval Classroom”; Speer and Wegener, *Wissen über Grenzen*; Goyens, *Science Translated*.

30 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, xii, 6. The traditional interpretation of Aristotle – which goes back as far as Augustine (*De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, i 5–7) and Simplicius (*On Aristotle’s Physics*, i 7) and is accepted by Aquinas (*De Principiis Naturae*, § 13) – holds that Aristotle believes in something called “prime matter,” which is the matter of the elements, where each element is “a compound of matter and form.” See Ainsworth, “Form vs. Matter.” On the impact of Aristotelian ideas on Western medieval artists’ invention of new images to illustrate the creation story in Genesis, see Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*; also Boespflug and de Preville, “La création dans l’art médiéval”; Cahn, *Romanesque Bible Illumination*; Büchsel, “Das Schöpfungsmosaik von San Marco.” Camille, “Manuscript Illumination” and “Illuminating Thought,” has pointed to the new ideas quickly taken up from the above-noted instructional illustrated manuscripts and widely circulated among scholars in Paris and beyond.

31 See Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science*, 218.

32 Aertsen et al., *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277*. For the reasoning and wording of Tempier’s prohibition see Tempier, *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*.

At the same time, and in the same places that natural philosophy was breaking new ground, art was also heading into new territory. Artists invented new pictorial solutions for representing the creation of the cosmos in manuscripts and, more generally, for representing “nature” produced in the Italian city-states. Similar developments were also unfolding in artists’ workshops north of the Alps, in Paris, Avignon, London, Cologne, Prague, and beyond. Giotto, for example, gained fame among his contemporaries, both artists and natural philosophers, for capturing not only the physical appearance but also the emotional reality and “nature” of the people he depicted.³³ Commenting on Aristotle’s *Physics*, Petrus de Abano praised Giotto for his ability to represent the inner and outer qualities of the subjects in a lifelike manner.³⁴ In his work Giotto also provided a hitherto unknown coherence of spatial and dramatic settings, enhanced by the achievements of linear perspective and enriched with details derived from his study of nature and choice of stirring narratives, condensed into chosen moments and motifs.

What happened in art at this time, besides the rise of naturalism, was a process of diffidence into a multitude of representational possibilities. In the decades following the 1270s, we can observe their presence alongside a growing naturalism. On the one hand, a *figura* could now contribute to various forms of *aisthesis* and to the evolution of a new type of allegorical imagery – its history still largely unwritten.³⁵ On the other hand, the artistic images emerging from these movements not only invited reflection on theological and aesthetic questions but also touched on sensitive points in debates taking place in other disciplines. Among other things, they prompt viewers to reflect on the genesis of animation, liveliness, and life.

The debates among medieval scholars over what was before the beginning, before the divine creation of the cosmos, and over the origin of life were sparked by a series of Toledo School translations into Latin of Arabic commentaries on Aristotle’s

33 For the history of naturalistic representation see Bakker, “Au vif”; Belting, *Florenz und Bagdad*; Turel, “Living Pictures”; Jacobs, *The Living Image*; Emison, *Creating the “Divine” Artist*; Kruse, *Wozu Menschen malen*.

34 Thomann, “Pietro d’Abano on Giotto,” 241f. Petrus de Abano, *Problemata in Physica*, 64: “The reason (for making portraits) is that by means of images of the face, the kind of disposition [*dispositio*] of that person is represented, whose image it is, and most of all, when it is painted by a painter capable of producing a likeness in all respects – for example by Giotto – so that [by means of the image] we reach a knowledge of [the person portrayed] in such a way that if he met us he would be recognized through [the painted image].” The translation is based on Frojmovic, “Giotto’s Circumspection,” 204.

35 Important individual aspects of this development are treated in Meier, “Überlegungen zum gegenwärtigen Stand der Allegorie-Forschung”; Meier-Staubach, “Malerei des Unsichtbaren”; Freytag, “Allegorie, Allegorese”; Staubach, “Signa utilia”; Hodne, “Faces of Time”; Myara Kelif, “De l’Éden païen au paradis terrestre”; Warncke, *Symbol, Emblem, Allegorie*; Dunlop, “Allegory, Painting and Petrarch.”

writings.³⁶ Dominicus Gundissalinus translated important commentators on Aristotle's work, among them Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, and al-Kindī. Furthermore, in his own writings on the soul (*De anima, De unitate*)³⁷ and in his two most influential works, *De divisione philosophiae* and *De causis* (which include sections on optics, cosmology, and metaphysics), Gundissalinus disseminated many important Aristotelian ideas with which he had become familiar through these commentators.³⁸

The interest of Western medieval scholars in the writings of the Islamic philosopher and Cordoban lawyer Averroes, and especially in his commentaries on Aristotle, grew through the Toledo School's work, catapulting him/his works to the center of scholarly interest at universities in Paris as well as in England, Italy, and Germany. In Paris (as elsewhere), the focus on Aristotle as mediated by Arabic translations was itself accompanied by a growing interest in the works of Arabic philosophers, themselves mediating an Aristotelian tradition. Hence the *Tractatus de anima* ("Treatise on the Soul," written before 1204) by the scholastic philosopher John Blund (d. 1248) reflects knowledge of al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, al-Ghazālī, Quṣṭā ibn Lūqā, and especially Avicenna, all in Latin translation, together with translations of Arabic medical writings by Constantine the African and the works of Gundissalinus, himself strongly influenced by Arabic authors.³⁹ (Certainly in part because of this pluralism of ideas, Blund would be expelled from the University of Paris during a protest organized by tutors at the cathedral schools against restrictions by church officials with regard to Aristotelian thoughts in 1229.) Here, in the Paris context, a growing interest in Averroes's own ideas was reflected in two works by William of Auvergne, *De universo* and *De anima* (1231–1236).⁴⁰

With the work of the translators and scholars in Toledo and elsewhere, crucial themes such as prime matter (*prima materia*), the origin of movements (*primum movens*), the question of who animated the heavens (God alone or God together with the angels), the spherical construction of the cosmos, and the question of the generation of life moved to the center of scholarly interest in the universities of Paris, England, Italy, and Germany. The author primarily responsible for continuing to develop the latter concept – postulating that nature itself can create and produce creatures not already part of a divine plan – was Alain de Lille (d. 1202). This is

36 Brasa Díez, "Métodos y cuestiones filosóficas"; Gil, *La escuela de traductores de Toledo*; Cardaillac, *Tolède XIIe–XIIIe*; Jolivet, "The Arabic Inheritance"; Grebner and Fried, *Kulturtransfer und Hofgesellschaft im Mittelalter*; Burnett, "The Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program in Toledo."

37 Gundissalinus, *De anima*; Gundissalinus, *De unitate*; Abeloos, "Un cinquième manuscrit."

38 Häring, "Thierry of Chartres and Dominicus Gundissalinus"; Endres, "Die Nachwirkung von Gundissalinus' 'De immortalitate animae'"; Fidora, *Die Wissenschaftstheorie des Dominicus Gundissalinus*; Fidora, "Dominicus Gundissalinus."

39 Jolivet, "The Arabic Inheritance," 146.

40 Maccagnolo, "David of Dinant and the Beginnings of Aristotelism in Paris," 429.

expressed most directly in de Lille's introduction of the genius figure and idea of *ingenium* in his allegorical poem *De planctu naturae* ("The Complaint of Nature"), to which we will return. De Lille would serve as a key point of reference for debates on the origin of creativity; texts such as *De planctu naturae* and his *Anticlaudianus* (an encyclopedic allegorical dialogue including deliberations about the divine the creation of the cosmos) became canonical and were broadly used for teaching.⁴¹

When it comes to the reception of this literature and its ideas in medieval art, it is important to note that the oldest surviving manuscripts containing the *Anticlaudianus* are not decorated with illuminations; nor for the most part are twelfth-century Latin encyclopedic compendia and treatises such as Hugo of Saint Victor's *Didascalicon*, Petrus Comestor's *Historia scholastica*, and Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum maius*. The same goes for manuscripts produced in the thirteenth century assembling texts used in the scholastic education curriculum. I will discuss the very few exceptions to this rule in the next chapter.⁴²

On the basis of visual analysis of illuminations of Genesis and illustrations in encyclopedic texts addressing the creation of the cosmos, we can begin to understand how such ideas, developed in written form, take shape in pictorial compositions and were actively received by medieval artists in their miniatures and sometimes played a significant role in the production and dissemination of medieval knowledge.

Artifex and Opifex

Often, medieval inscriptions not only provide us with the maker's name but also mention the concrete profession of the craftsman. More frequently, however, more general terms are used, such as *artifex* and *opifex*.⁴³ For example, the former screens of the *schola cantorum* (a choir enclosure at the center of the nave in early church buildings) in Ferentino and Rome (now marble fragments) are signed by the same craftsman, a certain Paul, who refers to himself once as an *opifex* and once as an *artifex*.⁴⁴ The term *opifex* emphasizes the making of the work (*opus*), and *artifex*

41 For two fifteenth-century illuminations of *natura* on a throne opposite *natura naturata* in Alain de Lille's *Anticlaudianus*, *natura* here depicted as part of the earth, see London, Wellcome, Ms. 49, fol. 68 and Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense, Ms. 1404, fol. 29v. See also Modersohn, *Natura als Göttin*, 41 and n. 62.

42 Geneva Ms. Lat. 76, London Royal 12 G V, and Mss. 20 Schlatt are two exceptions to this rule.

43 For the complex terminology of *artifex* and *opifex* see Hamburger, "The Hand of God"; Kruse, *Wozu Menschen malen*; Modersohn, "Natura Artifex"; Muratova, "Vir quidem fallax"; Tachau, "God's Compass"; and Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 544–546. A first version of a part of this chapter was published previously, Fricke, "Artifex and Opifex".

44 Claussen, "Früher Künstlerstolz," 11–12: The inscription at Ferentino reads "Hoc opifex magnus fecit vir nomine Paulus," and in Rome "Nunc operis quicquid chorus ecce nitet pretiosi artificis scult(o)ris com(po?)s(u?)it bona dextp(!)ra Pauli." On *artifex* and *opifex* see note 43 above.

the craft (*ars*) needed to make it.⁴⁵ The distinction originates in different Latin translations of the term δημιουργός (*dēmi(o)urgós*) from Plato's *Timaios* and the terms used for the Divine Creator in the Vulgate, translated by Jerome (Sap. 13:1 and Hebr. 11:10). Augustine still used Cicero's Latin translation of the *Timaios* (translating δημιουργός as *fabricator* and *aedificator*), while Chalcidius's translation of the same text – which was widely used in the medieval period – renders the term *opifex*, *fabricator*, *genitor*. Other general terms besides *artifex* and *opifex* used in inscriptions are *auctor*, *factor*, and *faber/phaber*. For example, in a treatise on “the twelve stones,” *De duodecim lapidibus*, probably written in the twelfth century, the Divine Creator is called *opifex*.⁴⁶

Although the Divine Creator is more often referred to as *artifex*, we find a certain interchangeability of these two terms in the twelfth century. In this light, it is clear that Paul understands himself as a craftsman and artisan, not explicitly as an “artist” – as much as we might like to use that word in our translations. The term “artist” carries a heavy weight: it has been charged with an array of notions, ranging from the divine artist creating from nothing to the artistic genius,⁴⁷ to medieval and modern ideas about artistic practice being merged, and sometimes suppressed, in the modern use of the word. How does the modern concept of a distinctive artist-creator relate to the production of medieval images? And can we gain insights from the analysis of medieval images into the medieval artists' ideas about the relationship between their work and the Divine Creator?

On first encounter, the use of the term “artists” for medieval creators of illuminations, sculptures, and so forth may indeed seem like an anachronism. But using this term has the advantage of underscoring their work's strong roots and intrinsic relationship with the history of the concept of *artes* in its manifold variations. Ernst Robert Curtius has briefly summarized this relationship, pointing to a distinction between two medieval theories of the *artes* – one patristic, the other secular and scholastic – with the two frequently interrelated but nonetheless profoundly different in respect to their theory of origin. On the patristic side, Curtius argues that it was Augustine and, even more importantly, Cassiodor who first differentiated between clerical knowledge and secular *artes* as represented in the former schools of Alexandria, Edessa, and Nisibis. For Cassiodor, the *artes* had their roots in divine wisdom and were part of the Bible, ancient scholars having gained their knowledge

45 See Dietl, *Die Sprache der Signatur*, 47–99. For a discussion of the medieval concept of the artist and important differences between the medieval emphasis on collaboration and the modern emphasis on artistic individuality and authorship see Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, chap. 2.

46 Lehmann-Brockhaus, *Lateinische Schriftquellen*, 96: “Cives caelestis patriae regi regum canite / Qui est supremus opifex civitatis modicae / In cuius aedificio talis extat fundatio et caet. Sequuntur de virtutibus et vitiis quaedam carmina.” I am grateful to Jens Ruffer for this reference.

47 Emison, *Creating the “Divine” Artist*; Kruse, *Wozu Menschen malen*.

from the sacred scriptures, which were known to all people, including pagans. Coexisting with this patristic theory was a “secular” counterpart attributing the origin of the *artes* to Jupiter, Egypt, Chaldea, or the seven pillars of wisdom. For his part, John of Salisbury saw the origin of all the *artes in natura*.⁴⁸

Profound revisions of these opposing ideas began with the late twelfth-century reception of Aristotelian ideas. It appears to me that the tension between the two approaches that Curtius differentiated is important to consider in gaining a sense of the complexities involved in the medieval approach to what we call an artwork.⁴⁹ In medieval art, the inscriptions *artifex* and *opifex* were clearly not signatures in the modern sense, claiming authorship of the created work. Nevertheless, many important studies have been devoted to both implicit and explicit references to medieval artists and their work on the basis of Western medieval inscriptions. In light of what has been said, I will use that term and “artwork” in the most neutral sense possible.⁵⁰

From the nineteenth century onward, scholars such as Adolphe-Napoléon Didron (d. 1867) and Fernand de Mély (d. 1935) used inscription analysis to revise the generally held idea of the devout, and therefore anonymous, medieval artist. The study of artist-monks by Anton Springer (d. 1891), based on primary sources and inscriptions, focused on the contributions of lay people and clergy to medieval artwork production. In the 1890s, the emerging practice of *Stilkritik* and attributions to anonymous “masters” introduced an approach particularly dominant in the analysis of book illuminations, medieval ivories, and sculpture. Resorting to style to identify artworks without labels or captions now cemented the notion that medieval artists conceived themselves in relation to the products of their craft. But then, much later and writing against the grain, Meyer Schapiro (d. 1996) would suggest reading the prominent visibility of inscriptions in medieval artworks – in contrast to their Roman counterparts – as a sign of a new appreciation of artistic achievement.⁵¹ Likewise, Walter Paatz (d. 1978) argued that, in the eleventh century, the use of the epithet *doctus* marked the emergence of a medieval artist from the sphere of simple craftsmanship, a development he saw as related to the spiritual context of *scientia*, wisdom and knowledge.⁵²

48 See Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 38–42.

49 See Gombrich, “The Renaissance Conception of Artistic Progress.” For Aristotle on art see Snoeyenbos and Frederick, “Aristotle and Freud on Art”; Brüllmann et al., *Imagination*; Posti, *Medieval Theories of Divine Providence*; Bydén and Thörnqvist, *Aristotelian Tradition*; and especially Amerini, “Averroes and Aquinas.”

50 See Dietl, *Die Sprache der Signatur*, with the largest collection of inscriptions and references to the literature on vernacular inscriptions. The entangled relationship between commissioner and artist is discussed in Elbern, “Auftraggeber und Künstler” in respect of early medieval goldsmiths; in Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*; and, more generally, in Claussen, “Früher Künstlerstolz.”

51 Schapiro, *Romanische Kunst*, 56.

52 Paatz, “Die Gestalt Giottos,” 92–93. See also Reudenbach, “Künstlermönche.”

Deus Artifex: Making and Knowing

To better understand the innovations that I believe emerged at the turn of the thirteenth century, including the pictorial reference to the concept of *deus artifex*, a brief look at the history of that concept will be helpful. As early around 800, Hrabanus Maurus (d. 856) described a sculptor as a “demiurge”⁵³ – a term, rarely used before then, which Tertullian had introduced to the Latin Christian world.⁵⁴ Hrabanus’s comparison is based on Plato’s analogy between the sculptor’s work and that of the god who creates the cosmos. The comparison is itself a small chapter in the complex reception history of Plato’s parable of the carpenter-sculptor and the idea he has before making a table, bed, or statue out of wood, copper, or ore. The metaphor at play is a very old one; it was taken up by Aristotle, and there are already significant differences between his version and Plato’s. Still, in both versions and their later reception, we find the carpenter-sculptor’s activities linked to the creation of life and procreative acts.⁵⁵

In Calcidius’s commentary accompanying his translation of the first half of Plato’s *Timaeus*, the demiurge analogy, he elaborates that every act of creation, including artistic creation, is subject to the principles of procreation. In citing the sculptor’s work with wood and ore, he uses the example of the similarity between twins to raise the possibility of wood’s essential differences since, when working with wood, even if one block is used for two sculptures, they are created one after the other, whereas, when working with ore, the same mold can be used again and again.

Still writing during antiquity, but influential for the later debates about what came first in the creation of the world, the ideas for the creation or the acts of divine creation, was Hellenistic Jew Philo of Alexandria (d. 45/50), who, by calling God *kosmopoios* (κοσμοποιός) – maker of the cosmos – emphasized the “artificer-like

53 Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*, 21:8.

54 Tertullian, *Quinti septimi florentis*.

55 Calcidius, *Commentarius*, 33of.: “Atque ut de silua diximus, cum de ea tractatum haberemus, esse eam principaliter subiectam rerum naturalium generationi, sic etiam de exemplo dicendum, quod ista species principalis. Omnis quippe materia siluestris opifici subiacet, ut aes statuarum artificii, naupego item ligna, sed haec non primitus subiacent, quia sunt aliarum artium inuenta, aes quidem mateallicae, ligna uero sectionis siue putationis; his demum subest terra, terrae item silua, siluae nihil, unde recte principalis subiectio est cognominiata. Eodem igitur modo etiam in exemplo rerum gemina species consideratur: illa, qua exornata silua est, nihiloque tributa est. Et est imposita quidem siluae species secunda, prima uero illa, ad cuius haec secunda similitudinem facta est. Sed nimirum fiet hoc manifestius in aliqua similitudine et comparatione consideratum. Ut enim in simulacro Capitolini Iouis est una species eboris, est item alia, quam Apollonius artifex hausit animo, ad quam directa mentis acie speciem eboris poliebat – harum autem duarum specierum altera erit antiquior altera – sic etiam species quae siluam exornauit secundae dignitatis est, illa uero alia, iuxta quam secunda species absoluta est, principalis est species, de qua sermo habetur ad praesens.” For God as a sculptor see Lakey, *Sculptural Seeing*, 49–53.

nature” of the act of creating an intelligible world of ideas before the actual creation. This idea was taken up and developed in the discussion of Genesis 1:1 in the *Midrash Rabbah* (rabbinic exegesis).⁵⁶

So which aspects of this comparison between Platonic and Aristotelian ideas about the creation of the cosmos are most relevant for understanding its medieval reception?⁵⁷ In his *Timaeus* translation, Calcidius chooses the word *opifex*, which, in the commentaries’ long history of reception, will often be replaced by *artifex*.⁵⁸ The analogy between God and a sculptor is frequently discussed in commentaries on Genesis as well as in those on Aristotle in the twelfth and thirteenth century, which include observations on the role of the intellect in cognition, perception, and imagination and the question of the degree to which man and God share the ability to generate new things.⁵⁹ This analogy (between the sculptor’s creative work and God’s) was further developed in a series of twelfth- and thirteenth-century commentaries on the Book of Genesis, which used it to thematically address the intellect’s role in reason, imagination, perception, and fantasy.

Theophilus Presbyter’s relatively brief mention of artistic acts of creation serves as one window into medieval ideas of creativity.⁶⁰ In the preface to the *Schedula*’s third book, Theophilus emphasizes the legitimacy of the artistic embellishment of churches, the artist’s craft constituting an act of pious devotion: “Through the spirit of piety you regulate the nature, the destination, the time, the measure, and the means of the work.”⁶¹ In line with this medieval insight, Meyer Schapiro, Michael Camille, and Peter Cornelius Claussen have all underscored how church ornamentation and decoration such as waterspouts, capitals on columns, pedestals for statues, or archivolts on portals functioned as sites of artistic freedom in the medieval period.⁶² For both Schapiro and Rudolf Berliner, sculptors in the Romanesque period had in fact begun to express a sense of their own originality and self-worth, a distinctive freedom and autonomy, despite their work being

56 For later commentators and the importance of the intercessor in Midrash literature see Friedman, *The Architect’s Compass*, 424–425.

57 Dronke, *The Spell of Calcidius*; Dutton, “Medieval Approaches to Calcidius”; Somfai, “The Nature of Daemons”; Somfai, “Plato’s ‘Timaeus’ and Calcidius’s ‘Commentary’”; Gibson, “Study of the ‘Timaeus,’ in *‘Artes’ and Bible in the Medieval West*, 183–194.

58 Somfai, “Plato’s ‘Timaeus’ and Calcidius’s Commentary’.”

59 For example, Guibert of Nogent, *Moralia in Genesim*, lib. 1, cap. 1, col. 39D; Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum in Genesim*, lib. 1, cap. XXIV, col. 263B.

60 The collection is known under the title *Schedula diversarum artibus* or *De diversis artibus*, and was attributed to the goldsmith Roger of Helmarshausen. See Gearheart, *Theophilus*, and Gearheart, “From Divine Word to Human Hand.”

61 Theophilus Presbyter, *Schedula diversarum artibus*, 205.

62 Schapiro, *Romanesque Art*; Camille, *Image on the Edge*; Claussen, “Früher Künstlerstolz.”

embedded in an ecclesiastical context.⁶³ As Berliner observed, there was a distinct kind of “freedom” and autonomy that Romanesque artists had in relation to their artistic inventions.⁶⁴

Already in written testimonies from 1184 about the builders of Modena Cathedral we encounter extensive confirmation of the skills of the leading craftsmen, the sculptor Wiligelmus and the architect Lanfranco. These are found in the inscriptions on the façade, in the chronicle recording the cathedral’s building and the translation of St. Geminianus, written between 1105 and 1115.⁶⁵ A reference to Wiligelmus is held up by the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who were elevated directly to heaven and who now usher the church’s makers to the same glorious abode. According to the inscription, Wiligelmus is praised as the maker of what can only be considered a “miracle” – in line with the phrase *mirificus edificator*, he is a “miracle-making builder.” Lanfranco is likewise praised as a “marvelous craftsman” (*mirabilis artifex*) in another of the Modena inscriptions. Were these striking attributions of quasi-supernatural workmanship not dated to the twelfth century, we might think them more in line with ancient or modern conceptions of the artist-genius.⁶⁶

It becomes clear that both early modern and far more recent ideas of artistic creativity have hindered a nuanced grasp of the complexities involved in medieval artists’ understanding of themselves and their works, of how they saw their role and status within a larger cultural context.⁶⁷ The contrast between the Renaissance as a time of outstanding artistic personalities and the Middle Ages covering its artists with a veil of Christian postulates of humility goes back to Vasari, and has been subject to sharp revision since the early twentieth century. As Bruno Reudenbach put it, the veil revealed itself as “full of holes.”⁶⁸ But, in light of the summary above, a certain difference between the modern and the medieval mind in this respect is unmistakable. Rather than focusing on the maker, artist, or expressions of the artist’s “self,” for the medieval thinker and artist the essential reference point and origin of creativity was the *process*: the creative act as the origin of all subsequent acts of procreation, formation, recreation, and so forth. This difference will emerge clearly in the following chapters as we look at illuminations of Genesis as a particular

63 Schapiro, *Romanesque Art*, 20, 33; Hanning and Davidson, “Ut enim faber.”

64 Berliner, “The Freedom of Medieval Art.”

65 Claussen, “Früher Künstlerstolz,” 14.

66 For other cases of such “divine” praise of artists, see Bredekamp, “Das Mittelalter als Epoche der Individualität,” 206–223; Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*.

67 Strieder, *Schri.kunst.schri*; Libmann, “Künstlersignatur,” contrasting the signature’s “invention” in the early modern period with the anonymous medieval artist, and arguing that the signature is a product of increasing art-market competition, leading to works being produced in advance. For early modern signatures and their poetic potential see Gludovatz, *Fährten legen*.

68 Reudenbach, “Individuum ohne Bildnis?,” 807–808 (“löchriges Gewebe”).

artistic challenge. Genesis itself offered fertile ground for developing questions of artistic creativity because illuminating the creation prompted artists to make decisions about what existed at the moment of origin, how to illuminate *ex nihilo*, how to differentiate pictorially the different wording used in the Genesis of the Latin Vulgate to describe the divine creative acts – words such as *creavit* (created), *fiat* (it becomes) *plasmavit* (He formed), and *insufflavit animae* (He breathed in the soul).

The Artist's Challenges in Illuminating Genesis

Illuminating the first book of the Bible, with its description of God's work in creating the world, provided medieval artists with one challenge in particular: Which version of the creation story should be depicted? Should the illumination include the preceding chaos (the *tōhū wā-bōhū*), the creation of the angels, the fall of the angels? Biblical scholarship informs us that the first three chapters of Genesis conflate two accounts written at different times: the Priestly account (Gen. 1:1–2:4a) and the significantly older Elohist one (Gen. 2:4b–3:24) were written centuries apart and merged to one. This double origin is thus responsible for two different narratives of the creation of mankind in those chapters – one version in Genesis 1:26–28 and the other in Genesis 2:7 and 2:20–22.⁶⁹ The rifts between these two narratives challenged medieval exegetes and artists alike as the two versions of the creation of the cosmos differ significantly on important details – was mankind created in a single act, or were Adam and Eve created subsequently. For the artist, the problem was where to begin the pictorial story – for example, with the creation of Adam and then of Eve from Adam's rib (recounted in Gen. 2:21–23) or at the creation of humankind recounted in Genesis 1:26–27.

In the earlier Priestly account of the creation of humankind, the principle of likeness is inscribed into the act of creation itself: bone is made of bone, flesh generated from flesh. In the second (older) narrative, merged with the later account in the first three chapters of this ancient biblical book, God first designs the form

69 For a history of the research on Genesis 1–3 and the different accounts in the Priestly, Yahwist, and Elohist sources see Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation*. In fact, the intertwining of narratives is even more complex than outlined here: "The patriarchal narratives, according to the documentary hypothesis, consist of three authorial strands, designated J, E and P, with the earliest strand being the J (Yahwist or, in German, Jahwist) source. For E (Elohist source) and P (Priestly source), we should not be surprised at the absence of Yahweh-names, since according to these sources the name Yahweh was not known to the patriarchs. But in Genesis, there are no Yahweh-names at all, not even in J. This directly contradicts J's view that Yahweh was indeed known to the patriarchs. Therefore, we must ask why there is no Yahweh-name in J's Genesis narrative. It must be because, in fact, there weren't any in the tradition that J inherited." Hendel, "Finding Historical Memories." See also Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*; Hendel, "Genesis"; Weimar, *Studien zur Priesterschrift*.

and then animates the body and breathes a soul into its face. Immediately after the creation of man and woman, procreation is addressed (in the Vulgate: *erunt duo in carne una*, “and the two shall become one flesh,” Gen. 2:24), rephrasing what had already been declared their mission: “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). Once they could begin fulfilling this mission, as they were created in God’s likeness, they could also become creative themselves.

Artists therefore illuminated the double creation narrative of Genesis, with all its inherent contradictions. In illustrations and texts paraphrasing and commenting on the Genesis story, the challenge of depicting the absolute beginning of creation – representing both the Divine Creator and first act of creation, and in particular of depicting the “nothingness” that formed the start of creation – provided the basis for various innovative solutions.⁷⁰

The Creation of Mankind

The early eleventh century witnessed a significant change in the approach Western artists took to their visual account of Genesis. They now often began not with the creation of humankind but with that of the cosmos – or, more precisely, of heaven and earth: as we read in the Vulgate, *In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram*. The end of the century heralded a different innovation that was to increase the number of Genesis illuminations: the introduction of historiated initials *I* or *IN* depicting the seven days of the divine creation of the cosmos. These representations of the first letters of the bible’s first words “In principio” never fully disappeared as they remained decorative motifs even after the introduction of printing.⁷¹ This involved incorporating the text into the frontispiece in the form of either just the initials (*I* or *IN*) or as a full sentence. Andrea Worm describes in detail the emergence of the historiated *I* initials – the process of filling the first two letters (*IN*) with all

70 Alanus ab Insulis distinguishes *creare ex nihilo* from *recreare*: “Creare proprie ex nihilo aliquid facere, quando unde potest dici Deus creator, opus eius creatio. Dicitur res creata creatura, quasi concreatura, quia simul materia et forma creantur, unde in Genesi: In principio creavit Deus coelum et terram. Dicitur plasmare vel procreare, unde in Genesi: Creavit Deus cete grandia. Dicitur recreare, unde in Psalmo: Dixit et facta sunt; ipse mandavit, et creata sunt, id est recreata.” *Distinctiones dictionum theologicalium*, 754D–755A.

71 Worm, “Das illuminierte Wort”; Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, figs. 67, 68, 69, 71; Peterson, “Scholastic Hermeneutics”; Don, “Historiated Initials.” Along with the development of multilayered reading systems, these initials also contribute to the advent of new iconographic figures such as the Tree of Jesse. See Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique Ms. 10730, fol. 5v; the Beatus Vir in M. 102 fols. 1v–2; Windmill Psalter, *The Tree of Jesse Including the 7 Days of Creation and the Judgment of Solomon*, thirteenth century, Pierpont Morgan Library. Mariéthoz, “En frontispice”; Glass, “In Principio”; Czerwinski, “Verdichtete Schrift.”

seven days of the creation.⁷² The illuminators “supercharged” these illuminations, packing the works of the creation into one page or even one letter, thus offering a sophisticated, multilayered reading of the double origin.

Somewhat less attention has been given to a second innovation that preceded the introduction of historiated initials: the circular arrangement depicting the individual days of creation.⁷³ At the beginning of the eleventh century, the entire world was often shown in six smaller disks that also referenced the six days of creation. For example, the *Cædmon Manuscript* (part of the so-called *Junius Manuscript* written and illuminated in England around or shortly after the end of the first millennium) contains parts of *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel* in Old English verse. Pages 6 and 7 provide us with a particularly intriguing set of drawings showing the creation in six disks (fig. 1.5),⁷⁴ while on the preceding fifth page a poem describes God’s plans for filling the gap left in heaven by the fall of the rebel angels. Here, at the beginning, the creation is described as an act comprising two steps – plan and execution. First God lays out his plan: he will create an earth, a firmament above, and an expanse of water populated with creatures. The actual cosmic formation is then outlined step by step, beginning with explicit mention of the presence of nothing but darkness and a wide abyss, before the creation of heaven, earth, light, and the initiation of night and day.⁷⁵

It appears to be no coincidence that innovative changes in *Genesis* illumination first occurred not in a Bible manuscript containing the Vulgate but in a poem retelling the *Genesis* story in the vernacular.⁷⁶ We encounter the illumination as the second set of miniatures filling nearly two full folios near the beginning of

72 Worm, “Das illuminierte Wort.”

73 An approach to narrative visual concepts can be seen in the anthology on the topic by Augustyn and Worm, *Visualisieren – Ordnen – Aktualisieren*, especially by Perga, “Bischöfskapelle im Dom zu Gurk.”

74 The following are all subjects of controversy: the date of the quires’ production; the reasons behind the odd structure of quire 1, with a bifolio followed by three singletons (and perhaps a missing quire “2”); the date of the binding, the writing, and (if not contemporary with the drawings) of the drawings; and whether the medallion with the portrait of Aelfwine is a later addition. For a reconstruction of a hypothetical quire 2 see Lucas, “MS Junius 11 and Malmesbury”; critically in this regard see Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 112–114. For the most recent pertinent bibliography see the entry in the catalogue by Breay and Story, *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*. Junius paginated the folios before 1655, which is why references to the manuscript refer to pages rather than folios.

75 For an analysis of illuminations with a closer look at the text’s placement, see Henderson, “Illustrations in Bodleian Ms Junius XI,” 140–143.

76 Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*. The manuscript’s current title reflects the role of scholar Franciscus Junius (d. 1677) in both its editing and its bequest to Oxford. Moritz Wedell’s unpublished habilitation includes reflections by medieval poets on artistic creativity, with particular attention to *Genesis* accounts in Middle High German; see also, following up on this work, Kiening, *Literarische Schöpfung*. For regular exchanges on these texts in 2014 and 2015, I am grateful to the reading group on Middle High German *Genesis* accounts convened at Berkeley by Moritz Wedell and Niklaus Largier.



Fig. 1.5 Creation of the cosmos, day 1–6, (Gen. 1:1–2:4a). Ms. Junius 11, *The Junius or Cædmon Manuscript*, pp. 6 and 7, parts of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel in Old English verse, illustrated with Anglo-Saxon drawings, Canterbury/Christ Church (?) (England), ca. A.D. 1000, parchment, 32.3 × 19.6 cm, Oxford, Bodleian Library.

the manuscript. On the first pages we are presented with the dispute between the Creator and the rebel angels, again filling half a page on the left and a full page on the right. Then, two pages later, the open manuscript displays the creation's six days divided into six disks – two on the left and four on the right. On the preceding pages, in a passage known as Genesis A that significantly expands on Genesis 1–22:13, the Junius poem describes the world before the creation as “swart,” “an abyss,” empty of joys,” and “ocean-covered earth, dark with eternal night” (lines 82–115).⁷⁷

The two overlapping disks of the first page of the Genesis cycle build a stage for the Divine Creator while at the same time emphasizing his position at the center. Moreover, by sitting on the edge of the first disk, he is clearly acting from beyond

77 Blum, “Cryptic Creation Cycle,” 215. Due to cropping of the left margin for binding, the instruction for the illuminator now begins with the final letter of the second word: “e gesyndrode waeter & eoran.” Blum suggests reading *Aer h* for *Her h*, so that the instruction reads “before he separated water and earth.”

the created realm. Instead of the dove hovering over the water, appearing in the Vulgate (Gen. 2), the illuminator depicts an angel covering his face, which defines the lower disk as the first day. Another angel assists in the creation, pouring light from the firmament into the disk of the second day, a day partially overlapped by the first. Here the line dividing the two disks and days draws attention to the division of the firmament and the waters. The line circumscribing the first disk and overlapping the second thus simultaneously demarcates space (that of the firmament/waters) and time (the first and second days). The angel also acts as part of the celestial sphere, of heaven as God calls the firmament at the end of the second day. There are few other medieval images where a line so clearly represents concepts as radically different as time and space.

The sequence of four disks on the opposite folio (page 7) is again meant to be read from the bottom up towards the Divine Creator, located in the disk of the sixth day within a mandorla inscribed with the word *salvator* to his right. The Creator is depicted a total of three times within this Genesis cycle: once in the left-hand part on the border between days one and two (as described above); and twice on the right, at the center of days four and six. In both the left- and the right-hand images the Creator is involved in an active process of creation, and his nimbus (halo) carries a slim cross with three beams expanding slightly toward its outer edge. Both the Creator labeled *salvator* of the sixth day and the Creator standing below him at the center of day four carry a book; but on the sixth day he also blesses his creation, and his cross nimbus has been further embellished, as though a smith – the first artistic profession mentioned in Genesis – has hammered in additional ornamentation. Wavy lines connect the disk containing the fifth day to the fourth one as if to indicate the waters which, like the air, are now filled with life. Although they only include drawings of a stag and a bird, these are representative of the manifold creatures animating the earth's spheres, commanded to be fruitful and multiply.

What is missing in this sequence – and indicated only through the inscribed references to salvation – the choice of animals and the *salvator* inscription – is the creation of humankind, which would be part of the sixth day. The creation of Adam and Eve is instead depicted separately on the next page (fig. 1.6).⁷⁸ Again the three scenes are meant to be read from the bottom right. Adam is sleeping on the ground, his body leaning somewhat stiffly toward the framing column at edge of the page, with the Creator bowing down toward him. Above and to the left we encounter Eve, almost awake, her face turned to the Creator, who seems to be adding final touches to his creation, with two fingers of his right hand pointing towards Eve's head. An angelic helper is already climbing a ladder extending from the Creator's

⁷⁸ Lucas, "MS Junius 11 and Malmesbury." The edge of an excised page points to the changes made in the first two quires.



Fig. 1.6 Creation of Eve, (Gen. 2:21–23). Ms. Junius 11, *The Junius or Caedmon Manuscript*, p. 9, parts of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel in Old English verse, illustrated with Anglo-Saxon drawings, Canterbury/Christ Church (?) (England), ca. A.D. 1000, parchment, 32.3 × 19.6 cm, Oxford, Bodleian Library.

feet to the upper scene. The ladder connects the earthly and heavenly spheres, rising toward Archangel Michael guarding heaven's open door.

In this miniature, the emphasis is less on the actual moments of creation but rather on the relationship between the Creator and his creations, as some discrepancies between illuminations and inscriptions clearly reveal: “Here the Lord cast

sleep upon Adam and took a rib from his side and created his wife from that rib”; and, next to Eve, “Here the Lord created Adam’s wife Eve.” However, the creation of Eve’s body is not depicted as an act of formation. What we see is the moment of her “animation” – or, more precisely, the moment just after that: Eve has already raised her head; she gazes towards the blessing (right) hand of God while his left gently touches Eve’s left hand. Three angels accompany Michael to his left, and five to his right, the inscription reading “here God’s angels proceed from heaven into Paradise.”⁷⁹ But if Paradise is in fact located “behind” the open door, where should we imagine the location of Adam, Eve, and the Divine Creator in the lower half of the page to be? What we discern in the lower half of the page is an interior view of Paradise, with us inside, while the upper part shows Paradise seen from the outside; both spheres are combined on the same page, bridged by the angel climbing the ladder.

In this and the following illuminations in Junius II, the relationship between depicted space and the earthly world is defined more clearly. God is acting not from beyond but from within an earthly space defined by two columns reaching up to heaven; however, the scenes still hover between different moments in the creation accounts. The heavenly angels are mentioned in the poem but not in the biblical text. Turning the page, the lines defining space and time become even more contoured and gain definition; now God addresses the couple standing on a small hill resembling *terra undulata* (earth in the shape of waves).⁸⁰ But he is clearly in the same place as Adam and Eve. He provides instructions for the couple, who are standing on the left, while the devil in the form of a small dragon curls his tail beneath his feet in the right-hand corner. In this sequence of images the frames change from lines to columns, but with no clear superstructure, and then to columns with an arch, firmly enclosing the space in the scene of the admonition (Fig. 1.7). Time and space have gained coherence, just as the devilish dragon is pointing to the story’s future unfolding on the subsequent pages.

However, this demonic creature not only has a future but also a past, harking back to a narrative that begins even before the creation. The *Cædmon Manuscript* begins with the story of evil, depicted in an initial set of illuminations that, like the six days of creation, spans two pages and precedes the latter. The first part of

79 After Edward Rowe Mores published a small first edition with plates in 1754, in 1832 the Society of Antiquaries promoted James Basire III’s publication of the drawings, together with engravings, in the 24th volume of *Archeologia* as a supplement to Benjamin Thorpe’s edition of the poem. For a critical edition, see Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives*. For Genesis B, see Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*.

80 See Ueberweasser, “Deutsche Architekturdarstellung.”

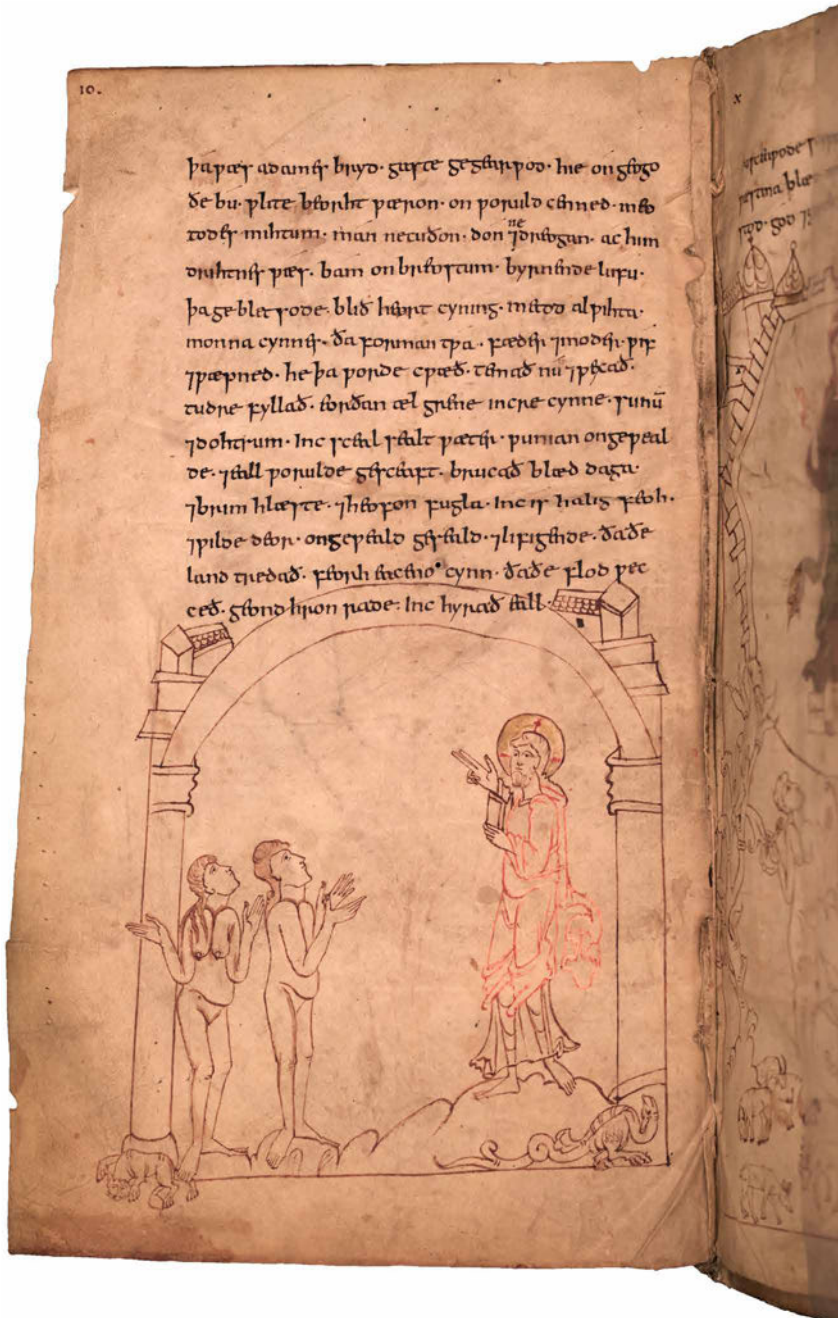


Fig. 1.7 Admonition of Adam and Eve, God bids Adam and Eve "have dominion over [...] every living thing that moveth upon the earth". Ms. Junius 11, *The Junius or Caedmon Manuscript*, p. 10, parts of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel in Old English verse, illustrated with Anglo-Saxon drawings, Canterbury/Christ Church (?) (England), ca. A.D. 1000, parchment, 32.3 × 19.6 cm, Oxford, Bodleian Library.

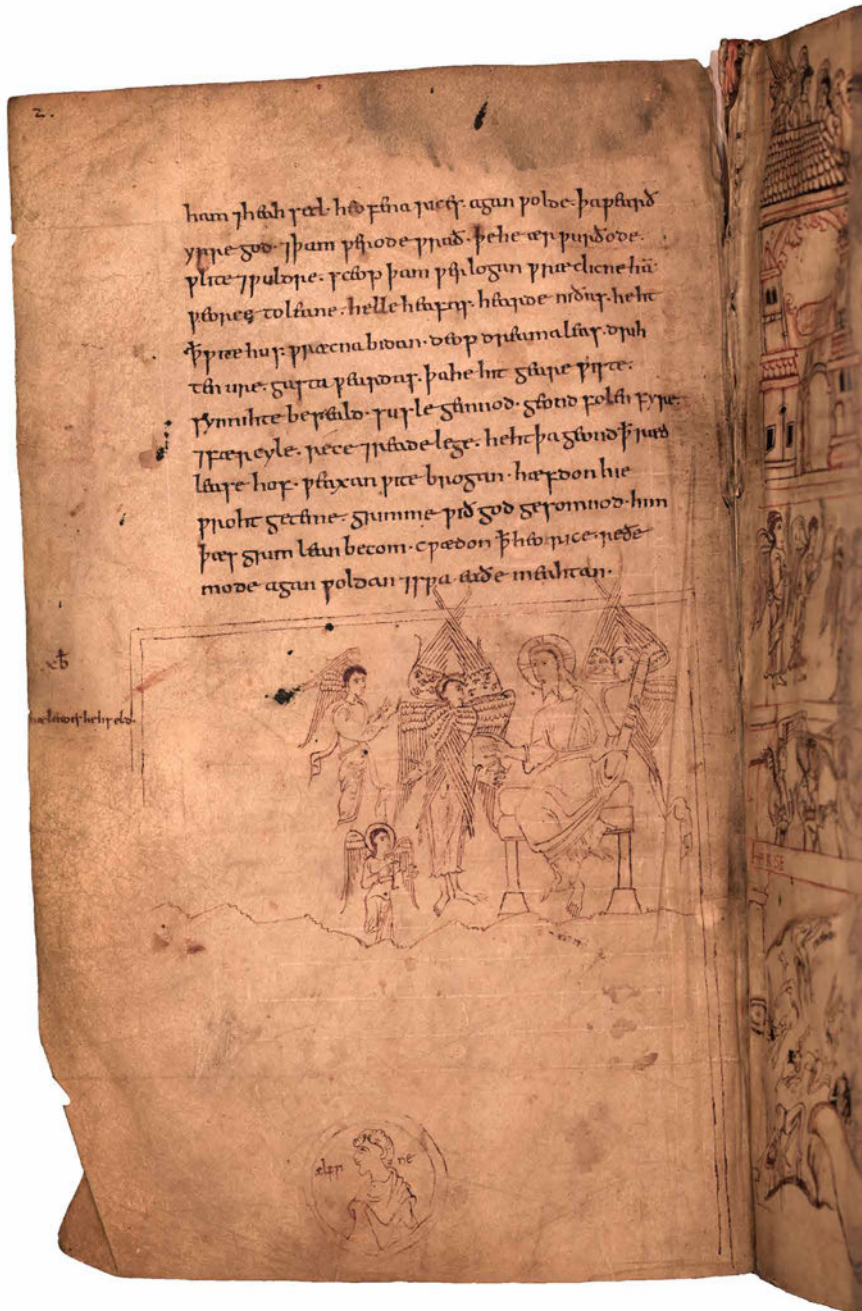


Fig. 1.8 God expressing his displeasure with the rebel angels, on his throne – at the bottom of the page: medallion labeled “Aelfwine”. Ms. Junius 11, *The Junius or Cædmon Manuscript*, p. 2, parts of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel in Old English verse, illustrated with Anglo-Saxon drawings, Canterbury/Christ Church (?) (England), ca. A.D. 1000, parchment, 32.3 × 19.6 cm, Oxford, Bodleian Library.

this story shows God arguing with rebel angels, and a medallion below labeled “Aelfwine” (Fig. 1.8).⁸¹

On an elaborate full-page miniature over several registers on the opposite side is the story of the rebel angels, including their precipitous fall (Fig. 1.9). The earth has not yet been created; only the celestial hierarchy above and the abyss opening its ferocious mouth below. In the illuminations with multiple scenes accompanying Genesis A (as in the historiated I and IN initials discussed later), we read from top to bottom (Fig. 1.5, Fig. 1.9), or vice versa (Fig. 1.6), adding a spatial dimension to the depicted scene in both “directions.” In particular, the disks allowed medieval beholders to imaginatively perceive the creation of a new pictorial space (analogous to the creation of the earthly space between the celestial space and abyss,) while lifting their eyes toward the top of the page. In the subsequent illuminations showing the creation of man, this space becomes increasingly architecturally defined, changing from a faint line to a heavy arch supported by two columns.

The difficulty of combining the two biblical accounts as well as other narratives about the creation of the cosmos becomes particularly evident when we look at Junius II as the illustrations here do not always follow the instructions given to the illuminator. For example, the instruction on page 7 regarding the division of night and day does not match the illumination of the acts of creation on days 3–6, so it is unclear whether or not the odd arrangement of folios in the first quire is a consequence of changed plans. The first twelve pages and page 40 (from line 89 to 142) contain Genesis A; but embedded in between (filling pages 13–40 up to line 8) is another poem in Old English, Genesis B, offering a second account of the angels’ fall and the temptation of Adam and Eve.⁸²

Despite its parallels to other Adam and Eve literature, Genesis B is a very unusual text, especially, as Janet Schrunck Ericksen observes, in the ways “it addresses choices

81 It is unclear whether the portrait is contemporary to the drawings or a later addition. Aelfwine was a common name, often attached to figures without monastic tonsure or habit. As its title indicates, Lucas, “MS Junius 11 and Malmesbury,” argues that the portrait shows the abbot of Malmesbury, specifically in the period between ca. 1043 and 1046, a suggestion rejected by Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, 112f. A *Genesis Anglice depicta* is mentioned in inventories for Canterbury Christ Church, but Winchester has also been suggested. Raw, “The Construction of Junius 11,” sees the figure as a layman, and speculates that he might have been the manuscript’s commissioner. See also Lockett, “The Dating of Junius 11”; Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives*.

82 See Raw, “The Construction of Junius 11,” who wishes to identify an Old Saxon illuminated Genesis manuscript as the precedent for this manuscript, and argues against the Cotton Genesis reception. She attributes the illuminations under discussion here, together with the portrait of Aelfwine on p. 2 of the Junius 11 manuscript, to the same artist. The first poem comprises 2936 lines, and is divided into Genesis A and Genesis B. The letter is embedded in Genesis A, consisting of 616 lines (235–851), an Old English translation of an Old Saxon Genesis poem.



Fig. 1.9 Lucifer's Crowning, triumph and fall into Hell. Ms. Junius 11, *The Junius or Cædmon Manuscript*, p. 3, parts of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel in Old English verse, illustrated with Anglo-Saxon drawings, Canterbury/Christ Church (?) (England), ca. A.D. 1000, parchment, 32.3 × 19.6 cm, Oxford, Bodleian Library.

in the garden.”⁸³ Here, Adam is actually tempted *before* Eve, and the accompanying text recounts Eve’s vision of the cosmos, accompanied by the narrator’s explanatory comments – a highly unconventional passage and rarely chosen perspective in Genesis accounts.⁸⁴ In this manuscript, it is as if the verses where Eve comments on cosmic creation were composed both after and with regard to the preceding illuminations. Eve’s position in the depiction of her creation, her direct interaction with the Divine Creator (Fig. 1.6), and the equal roles assumed by the primordial couple in the admonition scene (Fig. 1.7) attribute to her an active role, which could have inspired the accompanying text. Furthermore, while the poem rejects Augustine’s emphasis on Eve’s primary contribution to the Fall, it verbally and visually underscores the idea of moral choice,⁸⁵ as if the verses were modeled on the Augustinian idea of artistic labor as a metaphor of the battle between virtue and vice with which this chapter began.

The next major development in Genesis depictions we encounter during the second millennium is the inclusion of the cosmological account of Genesis – the Priestly account with a series of circles for the different days of creation. This shift reveals the illuminating artists’ particular interest in the origins of both time and space, an interest conveyed in representations of the world’s origin with the Creator.⁸⁶ While this development has been explored by many scholars, the question of why it occurred or what led artists to become more creative in representing creation has received less attention.⁸⁷ The new challenge medieval illuminators faced at this time was not only representing the contradictory elements of the Genesis accounts, but also incorporating the new ideas about the creation found in the earlier and Arabic sources discussed above.

Again, we often find particularly innovative pictorial solutions not in bibles but in images of vernacular accounts of the creation and in illuminations for encyclopedic texts. An especially intriguing example is a lavish historiated initial in a twelfth-century manuscript of Petrus Comestor’s *Historia scholastica*

83 Ericksen, “Offering the Forbidden Fruit in MS. Junius 11,” 48. Ericksen relates the illuminations of three scenes depicting the Fall of Man to the so-called Cotton Genesis tradition, revealing parallels to illustrations of Prudentius’s *Psychomachia*, a work that also describes a battle between vices and virtues.

84 This scene is depicted on p. 20, following the excise leaves and the changes in quire structure. But the text recounting this part of the story only appears a few pages later: on fol. 22, the narrative introduces Satan’s plan to use a lesser devil; the temptation is only described on fol. 24. A close relationship between the text and the illustration of this alternative account of the paradisaical events re-emerges on fol. 28. Here the illustration of Adam and Eve’s response to the demon’s proffered apple is located in the midst of the devil’s persuasion of Eve – and simultaneously refers to Adam’s earlier temptation. See *ibid.*, 49.

85 *Ibid.*

86 Zahlten, “Die Erschaffung von Raum und Zeit.”

87 Zahlten’s important study, *Creatio mundi*, details the iconography in these Genesis illustrations, focusing on the traditions and styles they reveal and relating their contents to various cultural contexts.



Fig. 1.10 Historiated "I" initial with creation scenes. Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, Ms Latin 16943, fol. 2r, Corbie (France), 12th century (ca. 1183), parchment, 45.5 × 32 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

(Fig. 1.10) whose influence can scarcely be overstated. Following its completion around 1173, it was taught in the curriculum of scholastic schools until the fifteenth century, and has survived in numerous manuscripts (albeit most of them not illuminated).⁸⁸ In our exceptional example, we see the creation of the cosmos in a sequence of five medallions (from the top): (1) the division of heaven and earth; (2) an angel, representing light or the division of day and night; (3) the four elements;⁸⁹ (4) the stars and the moon; and (5) life in the air and the waters. Finally, at the bottom, an additional scene shows the creation of Adam and Eve.

The artists illuminating bibles were also responsible for creation illuminations in non-canonical texts, along with the treatises inspired by ancient philosophers (including poems about Genesis in Latin and the vernacular. They therefore had to come up with new images, such as the creation of the four elements depicted in the third medallion of this rare version of the *Historia scholastica*. In turn, this pictorial innovation had a strong influence on Bible illuminations; as did Comestor's text itself, with its inclusion of the elements in the creation account, to which we will return.

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⁸⁸ For Agneta Sylwan's critical edition of the work see Petrus Comestor, *Scholastica historia*. For the work's reception see Sherwood-Smith, *The 'Historia scholastica' of Peter Comestor*.

⁸⁹ Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 133–144, gives an excellent overview of medieval theories concerning the four elements and their role in creation.

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2. Creating the Cosmos

Abstract: The expansion of debates about the nature of cosmic creation inspired by the newly accessible Aristotelian writings transmitted through translations by Arabic philosophers after the twelfth century led to a series of innovations in illustrations of Genesis. The German Hamburg Bible (Copenhagen, MS GKS 4 2^o), the French frontispieces of the *Bibles moralisées*, and the Spanish bibles from Ripoll and Roda show the creative ways in which medieval artists began depicting new ideas about the creation, including representations of *prima materia* (prime matter), the four elements, and the beginning of time. In these examples the divine acts of creating the cosmos are aligned visually with the artistic process of making manuscripts and the creative act of making a work of art.

Keywords: Hamburg Bible, *Bibles moralisées*, cosmic creation, prime matter, four elements, making manuscripts

Illuminating Genesis or, more precisely, depicting the cosmos before its creation, set painters a basic question: What was before creation?¹ In the Vulgate Jerome translated the Hebrew *tōhū wā-bōhū* as *inanis et vacua*, “empty and void”; but a more literal meaning would be closer to “chaos,” as emphasized in the Septuagint’s Greek translation – “invisible and not yet shaped,” ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκευάστος. The Jewish and Christian idea of *creatio ex nihilo* that this implies stood in opposition to the Platonic concept of demiurge, a god with artisanal skills,² and had been formulated as an antithesis to the Greek model of the world’s creation. It would also be differentiated from the Gnostic *search* for an origin, which was further developed in early Christianity by Justin and Irenaeus until Origen and

1 Painters and artists in general were especially confronted with this question since the matter out of which God created the cosmos was invisible. On medieval discussions about what was before the creation see Goetz, *Gott und die Welt*, 5–62.

2 Steiner, *Prometheus*, 25–28.

Clement of Alexandria once again revived the debate about what existed before creation.³

The pre-cosmic condition of chaos was surmised by Plutarch and Atticus, and described in Hesiod's *Theogony* and the book of Enoch.⁴ However, doubt about the existence of chaos before the first day had been articulated repeatedly. This doubt informed the work of many authors in late antiquity, including Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus, who presumed that the cosmos had always existed and had always been orderly.⁵ Over 600 years later, William of Conches (d. ca. 1154) also rejected the idea of chaos existing before the creation in favor of the theory that the structure of the elements and the order built thereon were there from the start. For William, the world and order were identical concepts.⁶

In the following century, we find an expansion of debates about the nature of cosmic creation. In theorizing different modes of existence, Henry of Ghent (d. 1293), an important ally of Étienne Tempier at the University of Paris mentioned in chapter 1, distinguished between essence or being (*esse essentiae*) and existence (*esse existentiae*), whereby the two are not distinct from each other, but the latter follows from the first. This essence of being is a kind of potential existence within divine essence, coming before *esse existentiae*, which marks things as truly existing materially or mentally. Only from *esse essentiae* can things come into being as *esse existentiae* through divine will. A chair, for example, exists as *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae* – it is both essence and existence. According to Henry, the essence of being, *esse essentiae*, is located before and outside every *genus*, and only gains a *genus* through its composition. Henry differentiates between *genera* and *species*, which pre-exist in the mind of the Divine Creator. From this perspective, “being” is not added to every creature or form of matter, but vice versa: that is, the essence, determining being, exists before becoming part of it.⁷ This is laid out in one of Henry's later works, the *Quodlibeta*; but the theory is in accord with that of his *Liber de causis*, according to which being itself was the first of all of God's creations. This “being” is not *esse existentiae*, but rather *esse essentiae* – also termed *esse latissimum*, *esse communissimum*, and *esse largissimo modo acceptum* in *quaestio* 3 of *Quodlibet* XI.⁸

3 See May, *Schöpfung*.

4 Schüle, *Die Urgeschichte*, 34; Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*; Hendel “Genesis”; Houziaux, *Le Tohu-bohu*; Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*; Maryniarczyk, “Philosophical Creationism”; Schwanke, *Creatio ex nihilo*.

5 See Leinkauf, “Vorwort.”

6 William of Conches, *Glosae super Platonem*, 175.

7 Porro, “Henry of Ghent”; Porro, “Possibilità ed *esse essentiae* in Enrico di Gand”; Gómez Caffarena, *Ser participado y ser subsistente*.

8 Porro, “Henry of Ghent”: “All that follows – that is, the determination of essence with regard to its objective content or to its actualization in the physical or mental world – is none other than a delimitation, or specification, of that being.”

Henry's thinking in this respect was long considered conservative; but in the past decades this verdict has undergone intense revision, and Pasquale Porro underscored the radical implications of Henry's theory:

[T]he only real term of creation is *esse latissimum*; all the rest is not created from nothing, but is constituted through an in-formation process of that essential being in a strict hierarchical order. Hence, *esse essentiae* is created first; next comes, through information, *esse aliquid per essentiam*; finally, the whole essence thus composed is placed in act. *Esse existentiae* is the actualization of *esse essentiae*, just as *esse aliquid per existentiam* is the actualization of *esse aliquid per essentiam*, though this is not a matter of things, elements or different parts, but only of different intentions.⁹

For Henry, *ideas* were key, and not only because ideas had a divine origin as divine essence; rather, ideas were basic epistemological principles.¹⁰

One option for depicting these origins of *esse essentiae* in “nothing” – as indicated, intensely debated the “nothingness” from which creation began – was by painting nothing at all and leaving the parchment blank next to the (painted) creator, as in the Kaisheim Bible of 1263 (fig. 2.1, fig. 2.2).¹¹ By the mid thirteenth century, cosmic creation had become a standard element of Genesis illuminations, found in the initial *I* (or *IN*) of *In principio*, the first words of that book. The innovations at work in the accompanying images did not so much address general questions (such as whether it was angels, wisdom, or the fall of the angels that came first), but rather centered on specific details or on the arrangement and design of particular contents – such as the “nothing.”

9 Ibid.

10 De Rijk, “Un tournant important,” 95: “Chez lui *idea* ne signifie pas seulement l'essence divine en tant qu'imitable par la création (de sorte que les idées sont les formes exemplaires selon lesquelles Dieu a créé le monde): désormais les idées sont en plus les essences (natures) créables en tant qu'existantes en leur propre droit dans la pensée de Dieu.” For a reading of the empty medallion related to the idea of horror vacui, the fear of empty space, and as an aniconic representation see Gertsman, *The Absent Image*, 1–2 and 22. However, the space is not empty, but the depiction is. Since the other medallions are filled with the creations of the respective days according to the creation account, it remains an open question why the Divine Creator would create “empty space” or “light” at that instant, or whether this is a visualization of *creatio ex nihilo*.

11 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 28169, fol. 5. The writer has placed a date on fol. 4: “Ligata est hec pars anno domini MCCLXIX circa Philippum et Jacobum sed scripta antea forte sex annis.” On fol. 278v we find a note on the rebinding that divides the Bible into three volumes: “Anno domini MCCCLXXXVII ligatum est volume istud per fratrem Chundradum Hochstetter vicegardianum isitus loci.” From the sixteenth-century owner's entry – FF. Caesariensium, with the Kaisheim signature N. I. 122 – we can assume that the Bible was made for Kaisheim. See Hauke, *Katalog der lateinischen Handschriften*, 88–89.

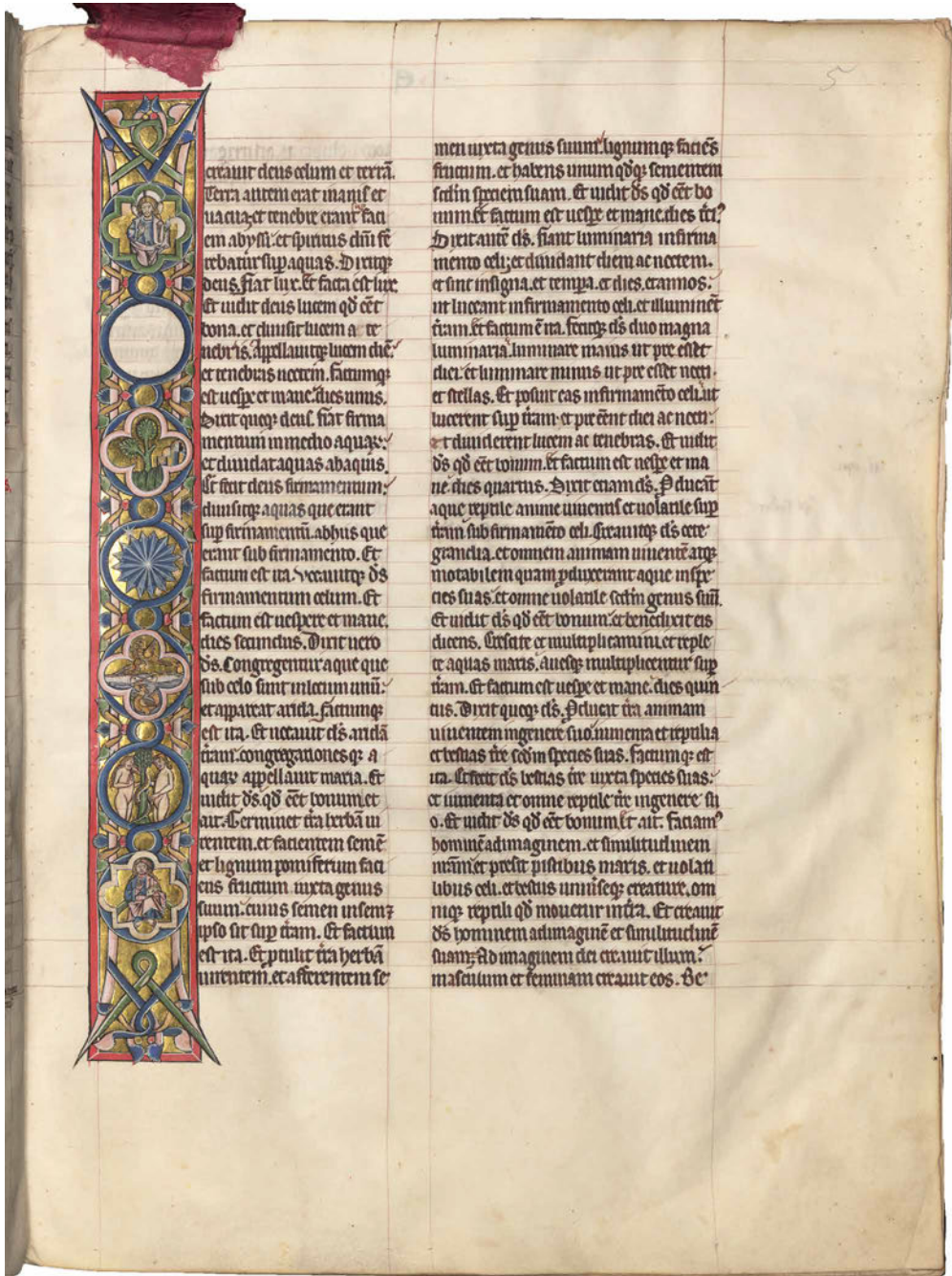


Fig. 2.1 Historiated "I" initial with creation scenes. *Kaisheimer Bibel*, Cod. lat. 28169–28171, fol. 5r, Nördlingen (Germany), probably between 1263 and 1288, parchment, 42.5 × 30.5–31 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.



Fig. 2.2 *Creatio ex nihilo*, detail of fig. 2.1, Historiated “I” with creation scenes. *Kaisheimer Bibel*, Cod. lat. 28169–28171, fol. 5r, Nördlingen (Germany), probably between 1263 and 1288, parchment, 42.5 × 30.5–31 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

In the Kaisheim Bible, this nothingness is made visible somewhat paradoxically in the second medallion on the verso. Only the parchment’s ruling (three lines dividing it into four sections) and some letters from the opposite page fill the otherwise void parchment. This unique representation of nothingness would seem to generate the following chain of reasoning: if one believes in *creatio ex nihilo*, then one also believes in a god pursuing an idea, more specifically an idea of what he is going to create – the *natura naturata*. Such reasoning is grounded in the premise that God created the cosmos, all inanimate objects, and all animate beings – the creative dimension of creation thus being solely attributable to the Divine Creator (*natura naturata*). God has in mind an idea for everything he creates, and this idea precedes the moment of creation from nothing, similar to Plato’s demiurge.¹² This leads us back to the aforementioned discussions at Paris and the position articulated by Henry of Ghent, whose theory posits (albeit somewhat hesitantly) that all creation has already happened, and that no truly “new” thing can come into being as all ideas (or essences) exist in eternity with God.

The “nothingness” in the Kaisheim Bible is placed in the second rather than the first medallion; in other words, the “nothing” (*nihil*) we see here comes at the moment

¹² May, *Schöpfung aus dem Nichts*, viii, points out that the theological assumptions on which the formulation of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* were based had already been reached in second-century Christian theology.

in the picture sequence when God, having already created the cosmos, is making the firmament and separating the waters, following Genesis. One explanation for this positioning of *nihil* is that the illustrator considers the second medallion's pictorial space as representing what a beholder would see while looking upon the earth: on the creation's second day, one would see nothing because nothing yet exists besides terra, firmament, and waters. What perhaps is being shown here then is an impossible human view of the "void and vacant" earth, with the heavens above and the waters below (both beyond the frame). This human perspective shifts the following day, with the artist now depicting seeds sprouting from the earth. The fourth day shows the stars, sun, and moon, the fifth living creatures, and the sixth the Fall of Man.

Another artistic option for indicating pre-existing (primary) matter is, for example, to color the "emptiness" of the earth (*terra unanis et vacua*) in a dark tone to represent darkness before the creation of light. The illuminator can thus show a kind of abstract void but colored with brushstrokes, as in the Hamburg Bible, to which we will turn now. When we take account of the philosophical and theological contexts in which such illuminations were produced, we begin to see that the embedded *nihil* marked a moment of possibility: for original artistic choice, a new creative freedom in representing ideas about divine creation – the works thus commenting, albeit implicitly, on the relationship between the divine and human creative spheres.

Creation's Beginning in the Hamburg Bible

The three-volume Hamburg Bible or Bible of Bertoldus was made for the cathedral in the city of Hamburg in 1255 but is now kept in Copenhagen.¹³ From an entry in the necrology for Hamburg dating from October 12, 1255, Erik Petersen concludes that Bertoldus – a former scribe – was the donor and that a certain "Karolus" the scribe (the painter's name is not known). Even now there is no scholarly determination of how many scribes were involved in producing the volumes, and the various inscriptions in the scrolls in the initial *I* seem to be in the same hand as the rubrics in the text on the same page. (We find its characteristic fine lines – for instance on the lowercase *i*, the *e* at the end of words, the beginning of the lowercase *a*, and on the lines crossing the lower parts of *p* and *q* – in the written parts of the miniatures and in the biblical text.)

The depiction of the acts of divine creation at the start of Genesis decorates the Hamburg Bible's frontispiece (fig. 2.3). It is highly unusual in several respects. First,

13 Copenhagen, Königliche Bibliothek: G.K.S.4.2; Petersen, "Bertoldus' Bibel"; Petersen, "Die Hamburger Bibel"; Petersen, "Anno Dominicae Nativitatis"; Weber, *Studien zur Hamburger Bibel*. The precise wording of the *Necrologium Hamburgense*, now only preserved in late seventeenth-century copies, refers to the first of the three volumes: "IV Id. Obiit Bertoldus, huius ecclesie decanus, qui suis laboribus priorem partem Bible a Genesi usque ad librum Hester comparavit et huic ecclesie contulit; alios vero libros scripsit in expensis domini Jacobi de Mone." Quoted in Petersen, "The Bible as Subject and Object of Illustration," 216.



Fig. 2.3 Creation scenes in seven medallions, Fall of Man, Expulsion from Paradise and Arch of Noah. Hamburg Bible, MS GKS 4 2°, Biblia Latina, vol. I, fol. 5v, Hamburg (Germany), ca. 1255, ink, pigments and gold leaf on parchment, 51.1 × 35.8 cm, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek.



Fig. 2.4 Creatio ex nihilo (medallion with day 1), detail of fig. 2.3. *Hamburg Bible*, MS GKS 4 2°, Biblia Latina, vol. I, fol. 5v, Hamburg (Germany), ca. 1255, ink, pigments and gold leaf on parchment, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek.

the *nihil* from which God creates the cosmos is depicted with unmixed streaks of pure color. In addition, the narration spans both the horizontal and the vertical axis instead of the single (vertical) axis traditionally filling the initial *I* of *In principio*. There is a vertical axis for the six days of creation of the cosmos and a horizontal axis starting with the Fall, underscoring two different conceptions of time – a prominent distinction in the Christian exegetical tradition since Augustine: divine, eternal time in Paradise; and earthly elapsing time for humankind that ends with the Apocalypse.

In the first medallion of the Hamburg Bible's *I*-initial are the words *Fiat lux* – “let there be light” – on the tiny tablet handed from the right-hand side into the roundel, depicting the creation of the cosmos (fig. 2.4). The Creator, who is holding the tablet, stands wholly outside the roundel, clearly asserting that he also stands outside the cosmos he is creating. His feet rest on the wings of an angel below him, who announces the third day of the creation.

Throughout the initial, God is either placed at a certain distance from the event or is sitting with angels between two roundels, announcing what is being created with scrolls or cards, on which the beholder can read exactly what is being created from the first day to the sixth. The scribe uses the present tense for all the inscriptions, even where the Vulgate employs the past, as for example for the fourth day, which reads *fecit* instead of *fiat*. The works of divine creation are thus shown as pictures, and the words that were spoken as the process unfolded are emphasized through the inscriptions.¹⁴ In the final roundel, following the seven depicting the days of

14 Day 1: *Fiat lux* (Gen. 1:3); day 2: *firmamentum in medium aquarum et dividat* (Gen. 1:6); day 3: *germinet terra herbam virentem et facientem semen et lignum pomiferum* (Gen. 1:11); day 4: *fiant* [*fecit* – as per the Vulgate] *duo magna luminaria* (Gen. 1:16); day 5: *producant aquae reptile animae* (Gen. 1:20); day

the creation, the artist presents the Fall of Man; then, in two final scenes on the extension of the initial *I*'s body to the right at the bottom of the page, the expulsion from paradise and the flood with Noah's Ark.

But here a question arises: If the Hamburg Bible uses the 90-degree turn from vertical to horizontal after the Fall of Man to denote the change from eternal divine to earthly passing time, another innovative decision is yet to be explained: Why are the days of creation divided into two sets of three medallions, splitting but overlapping after the first image, running parallel down the page, and then converging again at the bottom in the depiction of the Fall? The answer is as follows: What the Hamburg Bible veils more than reveals are the two different accounts merged in the first three chapters of Genesis.¹⁵ The younger cosmological account describing the divine creation in six days, including the creation of mankind (Adam and Eve), was merged and placed before the older account, beginning its narrative with the creation of Adam, the creation of Eve from his rib, and the Fall of Man.

The Hamburg Bible here offers its own solution to the problem of deciding when to begin the pictorial narration and, accordingly, which version to privilege. In the Hamburg manuscript, the two parallel strings of medallions reunite at the moment of the Fall: the moment at which biting into the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge results in the human capacity not only to perceive sexual difference and desire another but also to perceive the moment of the beginning of time itself, and, consequently, to perceive mortality and the passage of time. This is also the moment at which the earthly (and finite) sphere begins – and the pictorial story moves not from top to bottom but from left to right.

To better understand the originality of the Hamburg Bible it is useful to compare it to another bible produced around the same time in Brabant, and today preserved in Brussels.¹⁶ In both manuscripts the initial *I* includes seven roundels, each displaying a day in the Divine Creator's work and offering condensed pictorial "stories." But the differences between the two manuscripts are significant. The Flemish Bible is a typical mid thirteenth-century example of the most widespread approach to illuminating Genesis in manuscripts containing full bibles (fig. 2.5). The historiated *I* spans the full vertical height of the folio, from the text of translator Jerome's prologue at the top to the beginning of Genesis at the lower half of the first column. In the first roundel the Creator holds the globe in his left hand, and each day of creation

6: *producat terra animam viventem* (Gen. 1:24). On day 7 God remains silent and rests. He only speaks again in the next scene, with his interdiction against eating from the Tree of Knowledge: "*ex omni ligno paradisi comede, de ligno autem scientiae boni et mali ne comedas*" (Gen. 2:16–17).

¹⁵ For the different accounts of Genesis in the Priestly, Yahwist, and Elohist sources see Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation*.

¹⁶ Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Ms. Lat. 8318. Gaspar and Lyna, *Les principaux manuscrits*, 186f., date the manuscript to the second half of the thirteenth century and suggest Brabant as its origin.

is depicted in the subsequent six medallions.¹⁷ However the first medallion might represent the seventh day, when God has finished his creative acts and is resting; or it might represent him contemplating his creation – an enthroned Creator who is about to act. At the lower end of the *I* initial we see the Fall of Man and the expulsion from Paradise, set outside the medallions and thus on a different pictorial level, further indicated by the change from a blue to a pink backdrop and the golden bands that separate the scenes from the seven medallions.¹⁸

This different pictorial plane perhaps points to a different concept of time – the (eternal) time during the creation of the cosmos and the (elapsing) time since the Fall of Man, when mankind experiences mortality and awaits the end of time until the Last Judgment. In clear contrast to the Hamburg Bible's approach to the Fall and expulsion, here both levels are enclosed in the frame of the initial *I*. The iconography in the manuscript made for Hamburg differs at meaningful points from that of its Flemish counterpart. By comparing details from the first two medallions in each manuscript it becomes clear that the Hamburg version offers more profound and far-reaching reflections on the origins of the world.

The difference between the two Genesis accounts becomes particularly evident in relation to the creation of man. As we have seen, in the Priestly account, with which Genesis begins in both the Hebrew Bible and the Vulgate, despite being composed later than the Elohist text that follows it, God creates Adam and Eve in his likeness.¹⁹ His word and idea of humankind, his plan for human form and human fate, takes shape but is not specified further. By contrast, in the Elohist version offered promptly in the following chapter, God creates Adam from clay and then, after sending him to sleep, creates Eve out of one of his ribs.²⁰

As touched on above, the description of the acts of creation in the two accounts also differs markedly. For example, in the Vulgate translation Jerome used the verb *creavit* only in the context of days one and six (the creation of heaven and earth and of mankind), while the language describing all the other divine creative acts leaves the question of agency open: everything else is “generated” or “comes into being” (*fiat*), is “made” (*fecit*), or is “said,” “addressed,” or “spoken” (*dixit, vocavit, ait*). In the earlier

17 Compare the portrait of Jerome in the Bible illuminated at Liège, Brussels, Ms. 3939, 1240–1260, fol. 5r (<https://balat.kikirpa.be/object/20059911>).

18 Another visible change is the color of God's halo – red in the first, fourth, and seventh medallion, and green in the other four. It is unclear whether this change is related to the medallions' framing – those with a red halo have a light rose tint that formerly may have been greenish.

19 Gen. 1:26–27: “Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram: et praesit piscibus maris, et volatilibus caeli, et bestiis, universaeque terrae, omnique reptili, quod movetur in terra. Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam: ad imaginem Dei creavit illum, masculum et feminam creavit eos.”

20 Gen. 2:7: “Formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae, et inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae, et factus est homo in animam viventem.” Gen. 2:21–22: “Immisit ergo Dominus Deus soporem in Adam: cumque obdormisset, tulit unam de costis ejus, et replevit carnem pro ea. Et aedificavit Dominus Deus costam, quam tulerat de Adam, in mulierem: et adduxit eam ad Adam.”



Fig. 2.5 Historiated "I" initial with creation scenes in seven medallions, ms. 8318-19, fol. 3r. Bible, Brabant (?) (Belgium), mid 13th century, pigment and ink on parchment, 15.5 x 22.5 cm, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale.



Fig. 2.6 Frontispiece of the *Moutier-Grandval Bible*, Genesis 1:1–4:1, Add. MS 10546, fol. 5v, Tours (France), ca. 840, pigments and ink on parchment, 50.8 × 38.1 cm, London, British Library.

written Elohist account, God uses his hands to create: from dust and loam he shapes (*formavit/produxit*) Adam's body. This is the idea emphasized in the illumination of the Hamburg Bible, where we see Adam's feet unfinished, still consisting of a heap

of clay. Continuing the Elohist account, God builds (*aedificavit*) a second body from Adam as he sleeps, an act not included by the illuminator, in the form of Eve, so that here, as suggested in this second but chronologically older account, the process of generating a likeness is presented to us in a materially literal form.

In older illuminations of the biblical narrative of form-giving and of animation – for example the large, full-page miniature found in the Carolingian bibles produced in Tours, such as the Grandval Bible (fig. 2.6) – we are presented with both versions of shaping and animating the human body. In their illustrations, the Tournian painters insisted on the difference between shaping and animating, in keeping with the wording of Jerome's translation of Genesis. Adam is first given a body; in the next scene he is animated; and then he is sent to sleep so that one of his ribs can be removed. In the next panel down we see the creation of Eve.

In the thirteenth century, the miniaturist of the Bible of Robert de Bello (1235; fig. 2.7) replaces the creation of Adam with the creation of Eve, who is depicted stepping out of Adam's body. He is reconciling the double account, just choosing a different moment in which to do this. Here, day seven fills the last roundel, with the Trinity seated on a lavishly decorated throne. The temporal dimension and the specific moment the Fall of Man occurs is crucial to both painters, who add a horizontal beam to the initial *I*, moving out to the right and containing further scenes. The extension of the time-frame, reaching as far as the sacrifice of Isaac in the Bible of Robert de Bello and end of the flood in the Hamburg Bible, emphasizes the importance of this switch of axis and temporal concept: a switch from the vertical axis of the time of creation to the horizontal axis of elapsing temporality, reflected in the simple change of direction in how the pictures are read (and the story unfolded) – first from top to bottom and then from left to right.

Before discussing this further, I would like to compare these creation illuminations, including the apocryphal depiction of the rebel angels, with those in the Hamburg Bible with regard to the original sin and Eve's role in the Fall of Man, predominantly attributed the main/negative role since Augustine. Augustine was one reference point, if not the most important, for commentators on Genesis in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Praising his works in Paris in 1190, Godfrey of Saint Victor compared the wisdom of Augustine's writings with gold, their speech with silver, and their immense plenitude with the alloy of gold and silver.²¹ For Augustine, the focus on his readings of the Genesis account(s) was mostly about understanding how sin came to be. Comparing the pictorial decoration of the three

21 With these comparisons, Godfrey was alluding to a specific topos: that, in the church's treasury, the spiritual gold and silver of the Holy Scriptures is protected and (along with the parables' pearls) must be kept hidden from swine. Godfrey of St. Victor, sermon on the Song of Solomon 4:7; see Riedlinger, *Die Makellosigkeit der Kirche*, 192; Ohly, *Die Perle des Wortes*, 14.



Fig. 2.7 Historiated initial with scenes from Genesis. Robert de Bello Bible, Ms. Burney 3, England, 1235, ink, pigments, and gold on vellum, 26.7 x 19.5 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 2.8 Creation scenes, day 1–4, with Latin, Persian, and Judeo-Persian inscriptions. MS M.638, fol. 1r, Paris (France), ca. 1244–1254, ink, pigments, and gold on parchment, 39 × 30 cm, New York, The Morgan Library & Museum.

bibles, it becomes clear that the approach taken in the Hamburg Bible is distinct in terms of the basic question it addresses. Unlike the Bible of Robert de Bello (fig. 2.7) or the Morgan Picture Bible (fig. 2.8), this manuscript's illuminator is not

concerned with the origin of Satan (the origin of sin) – the relationship between the fall of the angels and the Fall of Man. Nor does he focus on the angels' origin, their celestial hierarchy, or their relationship to devilish powers on earth; but rather on the question of their contribution to creation.

I would first like to consider the incorporation of scenes into Genesis cycles not mentioned in the biblical text but which were nonetheless integrated into a visual narrative that still produced a coherent sequence of events. Both the Robert de Bello Bible (dated to 1235) and the Morgan Picture Bible (the mid 1240s) exemplify an effort to establish a visual relationship between the fall of the rebel angels and the fall of humankind in such a sequence. This alignment of angelic (pre-creation) and human (post-creation) failure serves to underscore the latter, lapsarian narrative.

The Morgan Picture Bible – which is known by many other names, including the Book of Kings, the Crusader Bible, the Maciejowski Bible, and the Shah Abbas Bible – was illuminated a decade or two later than the Robert de Bello Bible. It is an unusually large manuscript, originally containing at least forty-eight parchment folios (slightly trimmed), probably produced in Paris for Louis IX before the mid thirteenth century in relation to that king's crusade.²² The miniature depicting the creation on the first day (fol. 1r) includes the fall of the rebel angels: the deity is holding two masses, one dark and one light, representing the separation of light from darkness. The light mass, in the shape of a sphere, is held in God's raised left hand and bears the lines of the tripartite globe. In his right hand is a gray mass with darker edges and five convexities, giving its surface a whorled or knot-like structure. In the upper half of the first scene, six flying angels in long white robes accompany God, while, below his feet, six other angels plummet headfirst, with Lucifer bending downward. The half-naked rebel angels are hybrids with horned heads, tails and hairy bodies, and their skin is rendered in greenish, bluish, and reddish tones. In the following three fields continuing the days of Genesis, the cosmos is depicted as a sphere hovering in the middle of the picture field. God is standing with both feet on the lower frame blessing his creations from the left, while the angels observe his work from heaven. They are watching him from their perch in the Gothic arcades decorating the upper edge of the frame.

The Beginning of Time

From the mid thirteenth century onward, the beginning of earthly time was almost exclusively identified with the Fall and expulsion from Paradise. This becomes

²² The book may have originally measured about 432 mm by 330 mm. See Weiss, *The Book of Kings*, 15–18; Noel, "The First Iconographer of the Morgan Picture Bible," 109; Jordan, "Liturgical and Ceremonial Cloths," 105–110.



Fig. 2.9 Historiated "I" initial with creation scenes in seven medallions: expulsion from paradise, Cain and Abel bring their sacrifice, Cain murders Abel. Add. MS 18720/1, fol. 5r, Bologna (Italy), 1280–1300, ink, pigments and gold leaf on parchment, 38.5 × 25 cm in two columns, London, British Library.

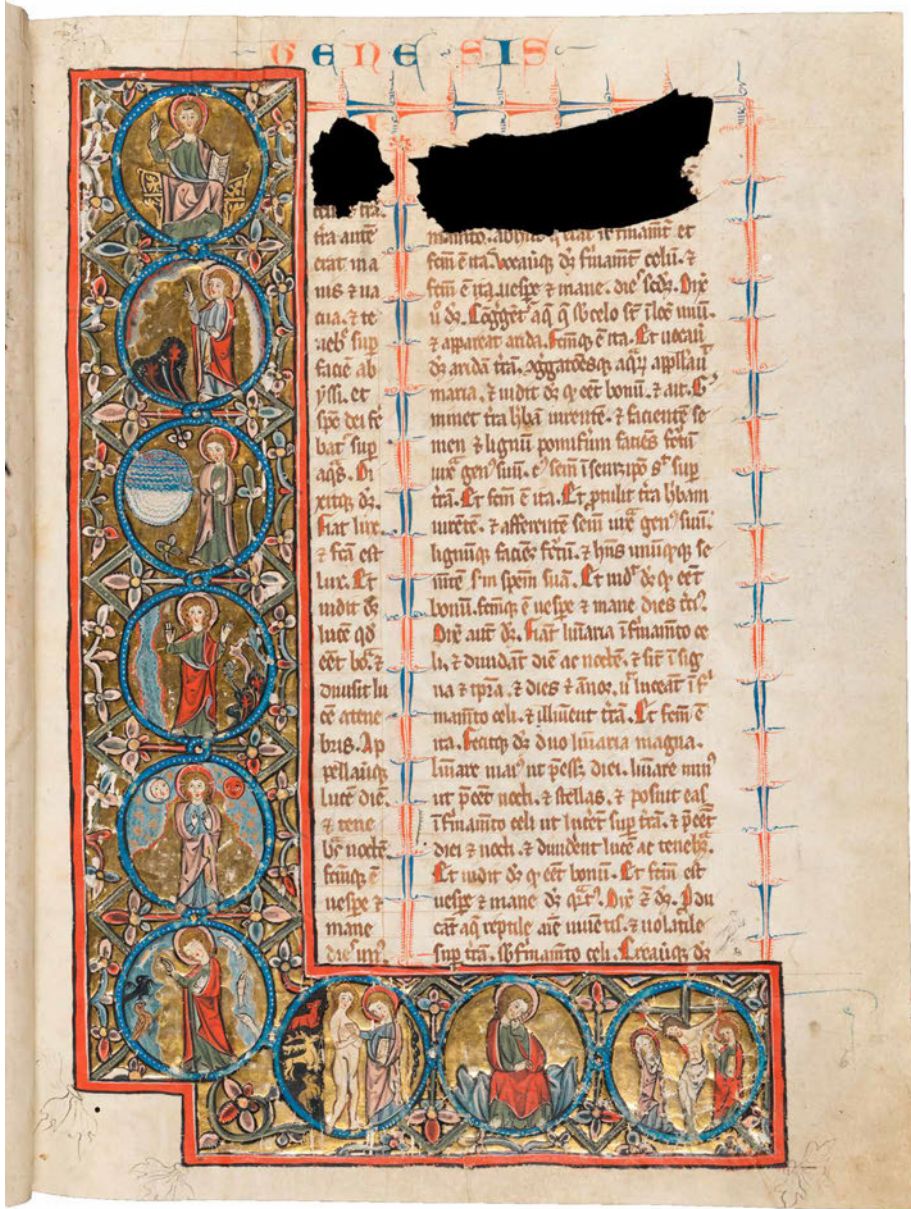


Fig. 2.10 Historiated “I” initial with creation scenes (from top to bottom): Godfather, day 1–6, creation of Eve, God rests on the seventh day, crucifixion with Mary and John. Ms. Wettf 1, fol. 6r, Biblia sacra, Zurich (Switzerland), 1260–1280, ink, pigments and gold on parchment, 40 × 30 cm, Aarau, Aargauer Kantonsbibliothek.

especially evident in cases where the initial *I* is given an addition to the right, seeming to offer the temporal axis a second dimension – and thus providing a

field wide open for new developments. For instance, in the Bible of Robert de Bello, six additional (but somewhat smaller) roundels shown bottom right almost turn the *I* into an *L*; and in the Hamburg Bible, bibles from Bologna (fig. 2.9), and the Wettstein Bible (fig. 2.10), to name just a few, extra fields added to the six days of creation likewise expand the *I* to the right along a second axis.

These additions present God's creation in seven days as the beginning of a far longer story, one playing out within a finite temporal concept that ends with the Apocalypse and emphasizes the passing of time according to Christian thought. From the mid thirteenth century onward, we thus find illustrations of the creation with almost any number of segments, showing scenes from the beginning of the cosmos in anywhere from three to sixteen fields which are either lined up, in what is nevertheless still reminiscent of the initial *I*, or that fill an entire page divided into fields of similar sizes (whether four, six, eight, nine, twelve, or sixteen).

In these miniatures, God's position as creator of the cosmos varies. In the Hamburg Bible he acts from outside the medallions, and thus from a different sphere, while in the Bible of Robert de Bello and the Wettstein Bible he acts *upon* the earth, standing with both feet on firm ground and depicted on a different (human) scale.²³ On the first day in the Robert de Bello manuscript we encounter the Creator working on the initial stage of the cosmos, while in the Hamburg Bible he is reaching with words written on a scroll toward a globe consisting of a colorful mixture of prime matter, the different sphere from which he is acting emphasized by the gold ground. In the scenes following the first day of creation in the Robert de Bello Bible, perhaps already on the second day but definitely by the third, God stands on the earth itself (at least the gold ground suggests such a position) and creates the stars, plants, and animals; and on the sixth day he helps Eve step out of Adam's side. We cannot help but note the oddity of scale: either the stars are depicted as bigger than they would actually appear from a terrestrial standpoint and God reaches out and can touch the heavens, or he is shown in two totally different sizes in the lower scenes.

In the Hamburg Bible the beholder observes what is being created as though looking through a porthole into the past, or into a time before time. The Creator then disappears with the Fall – at the moment humankind loses the ability to see him properly. This reflects a combination of both Plato's doubts about human perception and the Christian interpretation of a Pauline metaphor – the tarnished mirror (*Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate*) that will only become clear again on the

23 In an earlier example, an Italian Bible from the second quarter of the twelfth century (Perugia, Bibl. Augusta, Ms. L.59, fols. 1r–v, 2r–v), God is sitting on the globe while creating another globe alongside him. The artist here clearly took the pictorial formula of God sitting on the earth and applied it in a depiction of him acting “on” the earth – i.e., on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth days. See Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, figs. 163–166 and 75–76.

Day of Judgment (1 Cor. 13:12 and 2 Cor. 3:18).²⁴ It has become clear that the introduction of the second axis indeed marks a striking innovation, one meant to complement the time of divine creation with the human time that has begun with the Fall.

The Angels' Contribution to Creation

God is not alone in the Hamburg Bible, which is a surprise because neither angels nor their creation are mentioned in the Book of Genesis. (They are of course mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament.)²⁵ However, as we have seen above, when describing the creation of Adam and Eve, the first-person plural is used for God's words, which prompted much speculation among Christian theologians. Had the angels always been there or were they created on the first day along with the light, or else before the world's creation so that they might animate the heavens? This was a burning issue discussed alongside other questions regarding heavenly animation.²⁶ This was not just a question of whether God was alone during the creation or had angelic company, but also of whether the angels' fall, in particular, took place before or after the creation. The Hamburg Bible's first inscribed words, *fiat lux*, refer since Augustine to what was considered the moment not only light but also angels came into being.²⁷

This view was widespread throughout the Middle Ages – to speak the words *fiat lux* was to create angels.²⁸ It was further developed, in particular by Pseudo-

24 See Kauntze, "Seeing Through a Glass, Darkly."

25 Dan 3:57, Ps. 148. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 11–12, speculates that *creavit Deus caelum* (Gen. 1:1) indicates the creation of spiritual beings, and *Fiat lux et facta est lux* (Gen. 1:3) may designate the creation of the angels as they turn toward the true light (Augustine, *De genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, 1.3.7, *De civitate Dei*, 11.9). Augustine acknowledges that angels may have been created before the heavens and light; but they are not coeternal with God (*De civitate Dei*, 11.32, 12.6). Van Fleteren, "Angels," 21. Augustine also discusses angels' knowledge in *De genesi ad litteram*, 4.

26 Petrus Comestor, *Scolastica historia*, PL 198, col. 1055. Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 126: "Dies entspricht genau der doppelten typologischen Exegese des Petrus Comestor ... in der er im I. Kapitel *coelum empyreum et angelicam naturam* dem Himmel schlechthin gleichsetzt, im III. dagegen bei der Trennung von Licht und Finsternis '*intelligitur etiam hic angelorum facta divisio: stantes lux, cadentes tenebrae dicti sunt*', wodurch der Grund zur Darstellung des Engelssturzes im typologischen Sinn gegeben war." Angels were also described by Gregory of Nyssa as entities given power over the cosmos and its harmony by God, Rupiewicz, "Motion of Celestial Bodies," 72–73.

27 D'Alverny, "Les anges et les jours." Of great relevance to Augustine were ideas of Basil and Ambrose about the creation of angels before creation of the cosmos. See Augustine, *De genesi ad litteram*, CSEL 28/1; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, lib. 11–12. For the distribution of the *Genesis ad litteram*, including a list of manuscripts, see Gorman, "The Oldest Manuscripts," esp. 7–11. Augustine's ideas were further developed by Alcuin, Anselm of Canterbury, Honorius Augustodunensis, and Thomas Aquinas, as well as by Dietrich of Freiberg, a critic of Thomas's ideas about the origin of angels.

28 In this context the observation of Frederick van Fleteren, "Angels," is important: "Angels are creatures, not creators." For an overview of material on angels and the theological debates about *fiat lux* see Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 123–128.

Dionysius (sixth century), and later Honorius Augustodunensis (d. after 1137).²⁹ Ambrose (d. 397), on the other hand, took up the premise of Basil of Caesarea (d. 379) – that the angels existed before the first day of the world’s creation.³⁰ A third line of thought, examined by Jean Wirth, sought to identify an equilibrium in creation following the rebel angels’ fall, thus closing the fall-induced gap in the angelic choir.³¹ Nevertheless the timing of that fall continued to be debated during the late medieval period.³² Jan van der Meulen has suggested that the uncertainty about where to insert the apocryphal scene of the angels’ fall within depictions of events from Genesis – before the first day of the creation, as part of that day, or after the fall of humankind – led to that scene’s exclusion from monumental cycles decorating church walls.³³

The frontispieces of the Parisian *Bibles moralisées* all appear with a standing creator bent over the cosmos (fig. 2.11) or the Creator seated on a throne with the cosmos in his lap (fig. 2.12, fig. 2.13, fig. 2.14), and reflect ongoing philosophical-theological debates. The analogy between divine and human work of creation implicitly refers to an old debate about the creation of angels, their origins, and their contribution to creation that Augustine had initiated in book eleven of the *City of God*. Starting in the twelfth century, the debate again took on a new urgency now due to the encounter with Islamic ideas on the same topic – in particular those of Averroes, popular because of his Aristotle commentaries, in the *Kitāb al-Kashf*.³⁴

Elaborating on the divine attributes as exemplified in divine creation, Averroes addressed what had been a problem for several Western theologians: how to understand the word *fiat*. For Averroes, the creative work of angels pointed to the

29 Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 110–113.

30 D’Alverny, “Les anges et les jours,” 277: Basil, *Homiliae 9/10 in Hexameron*, I.5. Basil argues that a timeless eternity existed before the cosmic creation: God created spiritual light, cosmic order, and things that we cannot fully understand and that are invisible within this eternity. Interestingly, in this passage he also argues that *ars* is creation’s origin, and compares it to Bezeleel’s wisdom as the basis for the tabernacle’s decoration (Ex. 31). He here draws a parallel between *ars* and piety as a basis for perfection, making an explicit connection between human and divine creation. For the reception of Basil’s ideas see Freibergs, *The Medieval Latin Hexameron*; Rudolph, “In the Beginning.” Ambrose’s ideas on *fiat lux*, the creation of night and day, are even more elaborate; but he does not discuss the angels, instead addressing the issue of the origin of evil. See Ambrosius, *Hexameron*, lib. IV, hom. 2, cap. 9 and hom. 6, cap. 3.

31 Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 124. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On Angelic Properties and Orders* (*Περὶ ἀγγελικῶν ἰδιοτήτων καὶ τάξεων*). For a critical edition of the Latin text see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Corpus Dionysiacum II*. The most important medieval commentaries are as follows: Johannes Scottus Eriugena, *Expositiones in Ierarchiam coelestem Sancti Dionysii Areopagitae* (commentaries on CH, ca. 860–870); Hugh of St. Victor, *Commentariorum in Hierarchiam coelestem Sancti Dionysii Areopagitae* (commentary on CH, ca. 1120–1130); and Thomas Gallus, *Grand commentaire sur la Théologie Mystique*. Robert Grosseteste, *Mystical Theolog* (ca. 1240–1243).

32 Goetz, *Gott und die Welt*, I/2, 178–179.

33 Van der Meulen, “Schöpfer, Schöpfung,” 110.

34 On natural philosophers’ interest in Aristotle in this period, see van der Lugt, “Aristotle’s *Problems* in the West.”



Fig. 2.11 God creating the cosmos, frontispiece. *Bible moralisée*, Cod. 2554, fol. 1v, Paris (France), 1230s, ink, pigments and gold leaf on parchment, 34.5 × 26 cm, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

way, in the process of divine inspiration, an idea shapes a mass, perhaps analogous to the way in which the angels adjust the circle with help of the compass in the Toledo Bible, their wings guiding and directing its legs into the right position. The idea therefore existed before creation but becomes invisible once creation is complete. We cannot of course know whether Averroes's compass analogy was directly taken up in the extraordinary illustrations we have been considering. However, the frontispiece for the Toledo Bible (fig. 2.14), where the angels touch the compass, seems to fit this particularly well.

What does seem clear is that ideas of this sort, emerging in the context of debate and controversy among natural philosophers and theologians – particularly in Paris (as indicated, a debate centered on Aristotle and mediated by the work of Arabic translators and commentators) – fueled reflection also informing the works of painters. Hence we can understand their creations as offering a kind of pictorial comment on these new ideas. They formed the pictorial backdrop to the



Fig. 2.12 God creating the cosmos, frontispiece. *Bible moralisée*, Cod. 1179, fol. 1, Paris (France), ca. 1230, ink, pigments and gold leaf on parchment, 43 × 29.5 cm, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

frontispieces of the *Bibles moralisées*, which, in their depiction of the cosmos in turbulent motion – located in God's lap, together with a presentation of the creative process within a creative tool's drawn line – themselves constituted a new genre. In any case, along with an ongoing scholastic and natural-philosophical debate about cosmic creation, another, biblical influence seems to inform these illustrations, albeit in a pictorially cryptic way: the powerful, visionary book of Ezekiel, filled with imagery that has retained its surreal force.

Again, not considered any sort of direct influence but as the suggestion of a thematic presence lurking behind the scene of art *and* ideas, here a few sentences from Averroes – found not in his renowned commentaries on Aristotle's *De caelo* (*On the Heavens*) but in one of the philosopher's few, and lesser-known, religious texts – serves as an entrée to the pictures' apparent Ezekielian thematics. (The text



Fig. 2.13 God creating the cosmos, frontispiece. *Biblia latina*, MS. lat. 270b, vol. 1 (Genesis to Hiob), fol. 1v, Paris (France), 1226–1275, Oxford, Bodleian Library.

was not translated into Latin during the Middle Ages, but Abraham de Balmes [d. 1523] later offered a translation, given the title *Liber modorum rationis de opinionibus legis*: “Then He set his mind to the creation of heaven and it was smoke that shows that the heavens were created from something. ... It is He who hath created the heavens and the earth in six days, but His Throne was above the waters before the



Fig. 2.14 God creating the cosmos, frontispiece. *St. Louis Bible*, Ms. I, vol. 1 (Genesis to Hiob), fol. 1v, Paris (France), ca. 1235–1240, ink, pigments and gold leaf on vellum, 42.6 × 30 cm, Toledo Cathedral.

creation thereof.”³⁵ Strikingly, these two sentences encapsulate several of the themes seeming to tie the miniatures from the *Bibles moralisées* to Ezekiel. First of all we have the “smoke” “showing that the heavens were created from something” – a topos

35 Qur’an 11:9; Averroes (Ibn Rushd), *Philosophy and Theology*. This text was not translated into Latin during the medieval period, but Abraham de Balmes (d. 1523) did so later, under the title *Liber modorum rationis de opinionibus legis*. This translation is preserved in at least two manuscripts, Vat. ottob. lat. 2060 and Milan Ambros. G 290. Two manuscripts of the Arabic text have been preserved: one in Cairo, Hikma wa-falsafa 129; and the other in Madrid, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Ms. 632. See Speer and Wegener, *Wissen über Grenzen*.

we might read as evoking both the “cloud of smoke” going “up from the incense” in Ezek. 8:11 and the “great cloud” surrounded by “brightness” in 1:4. This in turn is manifest in the “cloudy smoke” or “smoky clouds” embedded in the illustrations: the circle of whirling clouds surrounding a cosmos yet to be fully shaped. Likewise, the “Throne ... above the waters before the creation thereof” might be read as citing Ezek. 10:1–22:

Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

This passage in turn points to the thrones on which God presides in the Toledo, Oxford, and London manuscripts – a particularly striking feature in that God has begun his creative work.

Leaving aside Averroes now, there are several other pictorial elements in these illustrations that appear to evoke Ezekiel. First is the remarkable golden or amber-colored set of compasses God is holding, especially in the Vienna Bible, Cod. 2554 (fig. 2.11), offering a possibly cryptic reference to Ezek. 8:2: “And I saw, and behold a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins, and downward, fire: and from his loins, and upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the appearance of amber.” This could also be tied again to the “great cloud” in Ezek. 1:4 – “And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire unfolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire” – and to 1:27: “And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.”

With the exception of Cod. 2554, we have angels who perhaps evoke the numerous cherubs appearing throughout Ezekiel’s visionary account, along with the many cherubs of Ezekiel 10:1ff (especially 10:4): “Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD’s glory” (see also 9:3, 28:14, 16, etc.).

Finally, we have the strange and haunting, nightmarish and divinely beautiful *wheels* and *rings* described and referred to at the beginning of the book of Ezekiel (1–28), in the same passage introducing the “great cloud” and “color of amber” emerging from the midst of “the appearance of fire”:

The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it

were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

This theme was arguably taken up by the illuminators in the various spherical shapes – the halos and encircled circular cosmos (in part defined by compass) we see in these pictures. The recourse to Ezekiel tells us, that through the lenses of Averroes, the role of angels during the creation of the cosmos was discussed again. This discussion of the angels' contribution in the scholarly debates in the Latin West was "grounded" in re-readings of Ezekiel; and, inspired by these debates, artists reacted to this discourse by assigning passive as well as active roles to angels in their illustrations of the creation.

In manuscript illustrations, however, depictions of the angels' fall as a single scene appear after the second third of the thirteenth century, in parallel with debates among scholars in Paris about the animation of heaven.³⁶ Combining apocryphal accounts, the theories of natural philosophers, and the biblical account of creation, painters came to incorporate a seventh or eighth frame with such depictions into the structure of the initial *I*.³⁷ A particularly sophisticated example decorates the beginning of the Robert de Bello Bible, where, in the first medallion, the creation of the cosmos out of the four elements is combined with the fall of the angels.³⁸ In some other cases the artist would decide to place the apocryphal scene after the seven days instead at the beginning.

Returning to the Hamburg Bible, which does not show the fall of the rebel angels, God is accompanied by six angelic companions, all with different colored wings and dressed in different colors. The color changes raise the question of how many angels are present: is it always the same two with a daily change of clothes, or are there

36 Petrus Comestor, *Scolastica historia*, PL 198, col. 1055; Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 126: "Dies entspricht genau der doppelten typologischen Exegese des Petrus Comestor, in der er im I. Kapitel *coelum empyreum et angelicam naturam* dem Himmel schlechthin gleichsetzt, im III. dagegen bei der Trennung von Licht und Finsternis '*intelligitur etiam hic angelorum facta divisio: stantes lux, cadentes tenebrae dicti sunt*', wodurch der Grund zur Darstellung des Engelssturzes im typologischen Sinn gegeben war."

37 Apocryphal sources included the books of Adam and Eve. See Anderson et al., *Literature on Adam and Eve*; von Erffa, *Ikonomie der Genesis*; Dingermann, "Adambuch."

38 For further examples see fig. 2.5 (Brussels Ms. Lat. 8318/19), fig. 2.7 (the Bible of Robert de Bello), and fig. 2.9 (London Ms. Add. 18720/1).

six different angels? As the color of God's clothes also changes, the same question would seem to arise concerning the figure of the Creator, which complicates things. God is depicted with a cross nimbus, which, for the Divine Creator, is an implicit reference to the (future) death on the cross of his not yet incarnate son, another implicit reference to the consequences of the Fall of the rebel angels.

In contrast to the Bible of Robert de Bello (fig. 2.7), the Hamburg Bible attributes a significant role to angels in the process of divine creation, a role manifest in the first and final medallions of that manuscript's creation series. Moreover, the Trinity is not depicted, while in the de Bello bible miniature angels serve as spectators accompanying the Trinity on a throne in the roundel for the seventh day. In addition, the subtle contributions of the ornamental structure and the role of color in setting the stage for meaningful visual references constitutes one of the Hamburg Bible's essential elements, whereas in the de Bello counterpart, while both the decoration of the roundels and the initial *I* structure the page, they do not play a similarly significant role.

The sixth angel is shown accompanying the seventh medallion that depicts God resting on a rainbow. This, the last of the medallions illustrating the days of the creation, leads into the next scene – the interdiction against eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Here the cross-woven ornaments divide the medallions on the horizontal axis. The two angels dressed in blue along the horizontal axis are probably archangels. Between the medallion of the sixth day and the Fall of Man, we see the Archangel Gabriel, referring to the future Annunciation scene – an event ultimately resolving the sin depicted in the eighth medallion he is gesturing towards. In the next medallion another archangel, Michael, throws Adam and Eve out of Paradise. These are the only angels standing, their wings displaying a broad color spectrum, missing only the light green (see below). These two angels acting on the initial's horizontal axis are not carrying a script roll; yet Gabriel's arms are open, and with this gesture he addresses the sinful couple in the medallion, their gaze directed toward the beholder's.

Who is speaking in this scene? Is God swooping down from above, out of the celestial sphere, already stepping back a level? The archangel and God seem to have switched roles, as if to underscore the fact that, now, with the Fall, humankind can no longer recognize, truly see, God – the Archangel Michael thus now taking his place and executing his will. Furthermore, the fact that the archangel is acting wordlessly on the horizontal axis increases the emphasis on the divine *logos*, the words in the Bible, the text of this manuscript.

The placement of God in different positions at each stage of the creation, in different layers (active at the center of the medallions, embedded in the golden middle ground between the roundels, and drawn back into heaven), and the subtle references to celestial hierarchies and executing power through word and deed

are all unusual.³⁹ Furthermore, the disposition of the scenes in three rows of two, connected at top and bottom by the first day of creation and the eating from the Tree of Knowledge, is unique in the history of Genesis illustrations. However, the Fall of Man medallion is the only one where the perimeter actually closes off the connecting tubes. Instead, the only connection comes from God above the medallion.

In the Hamburg Bible, each of the disks in the initial, vertical group of eight is surrounded by a tinted frame in a shimmering gradation of red to white. For the roundel depicting the seventh day, the illuminator added a light-green layer like an additional sphere inside the frame. With this additional green sphere, the disk of the seventh day resembles a vessel filled with divine light. It is the only sphere with a gold ground, representing the divine sphere in which both angels and the Creator act. A rainbow repeats the color spectrum and provides the resting creator with a seat. The medallion shows God as if surrounded by the spheres of the macrocosm, as the judge of the world seated on a rainbow. This repeats the color sequence. The divine sphere, illuminated with golden light, is emphasized through the gold ground; and the gold ground in the medallion of the seventh day connects this macrocosm with the microcosm depicted in the medallions of the vertical axis beginning with the Fall.

This last roundel in the series of the seven days of creation marks a turning point, emphasized through the introduction of the new light-green color. With the depiction of the fall that follows it, the ribbons of red and light green running through and connecting the pictures start to trade places, as if the illuminator wanted to emphasize the beginning of time with an additional, green, color. The interchanging red and light green are first applied as colors of the tree and the snake's reddish body, and as the pinkish-gray tone of Adam and Eve's flesh. Alongside the expulsion in the next roundel, the red and green turn into ribbons that become entwined; these then frame the last two medallions above and below, onto which step the protagonists of the horizontal axis – Gabriel, Michael, Adam, and Eve.

While as a frame the gradation of reds structures the vertical axis – as if to emphasize eternity's timelessness in Paradise during the creation – the green is introduced on the seventh day. God's words on the long scroll, his admonition not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, establish a connection between this roundel and the creation of Adam out of clay at the bottom of the eighth roundel. This roundel presents the fall, as if to underscore the beginning of passing time that moves toward the Last Judgment. To the right, now on the horizontal axis, green turns to blue at

39 Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 38, observes (with reference to Wolfgang Michler) that the practice of showing the Creator outside the creation's pictorial space was widespread, especially in northern Germany; see also Michler, *Die Wand- und Gewölbemalereien*, 195–198 and 211–218.

the beginning of the second ornamental rectangular junction. And finally, at the last medallion, the green and red form a porthole through which can be seen the dying victims of the flood, and Noah peeping through a window in his ark while awaiting the flood's end. His eyes follow a dove announcing the end of the divine destruction of the first generations on earth. The dove is a messenger from the future, a visual prefiguration of salvation and emphasizing the moment of time elapsing along the horizontal axis. Noah also looks forward while the dying are swimming backwards. The green band below and the red strip with shades of pink and white above continue into the vegetal ornament and become part of growing nature – as if *natura naturans* is now coming into place, replacing *natura naturata*.

But what exactly is depicted at the beginning of the Hamburg Bible? In the historiated initial's first medallion, a deep-blue sky spreads out above a chaotic mixture of – color? elements? matter? Blue, yellow, and red, along with black-and-white streaks of color, permeate the lower two-thirds of the sphere. This is an exceptional and novel pictorial formula for depicting something that has not assumed its final shape, a problem that is elementally recalled in the medallion for creation's sixth day as the rarely depicted clay below Adam's feet.

The chaos at the beginning of creation had never before been represented as a mix of color strokes. If we compare the cosmic creation in the Hamburg Bible with the same creative act in the Pierpont Morgan Picture Bible (Ms. M.638, fol. 1r; fig. 2.8), which was illuminated only a few years earlier (in the late 1240s), we see the Creator dividing heavenly and earthly spheres, each designed with overlapping layers in clearly distinct colors: two shades of brown below, and reddish, bluish, and white clouds above. In both bibles the Creator is acting from the outside, reaching into the medallion representing the cosmos with his hands (in the Morgan Picture Bible) during the second day, with the division of the waters, with or the power of his words (in the Hamburg Bible). However, in the Pierpont Morgan Picture Bible the creation of light is embedded in the scene of the rebel angels, with the Creator holding a white tripartite globe in his left hand and a dark mass in his right. In the Hamburg Bible, instead of depicting the creation of light, we see the earth, consisting of colorful chaos, and a surrounding sphere in dark blue. If the dark blue is “heaven” and the chaos below “earth,” then the four colors would represent the four elements, not the chaos preceding the division of earth and heaven.

In the history of depictions of creation, only a few medieval illustrations have been found in which the painter has invented a similarly forceful pictorial formula to that of the Hamburg Bible for representing the unformed and empty earth (*inanis et vacua*) out of which God generates the world – or the four elements. *Creatio ex nihilo* becomes an impressive metaphor for the origin of painting and, at the same time, for the origin of colors in light. What one sees is the either the unshaped and empty earth or the colorful chaos, depending on whether it is the moment before

the creation or the four elements not yet having assumed any shape. Chaos is rarely depicted at all in medieval illustrations, and the four elements are usually clearly divided into four “zones,” as in the Bible of Robert de Bello; but the Hamburg Bible arguably offers us a depiction of chaos as form. (One far later example of the same creative process might be the outer wings of Hieronymus Bosch’s *Garden of Delight*.)⁴⁰ What we see in the Hamburg Bible would seem to involve a fusion of the idea of primordial chaos with that of the creation of the cosmos out of four distinct elements. Remarkably, this latter idea emerged from a *rejection* by William of Conches and others of the primordial chaos approach in favor of one grounded in the presence of pre-existing structures, as outlined above, addressing the idea of *esse essentia* in the thought of Henry of Ghent.

Let us now focus on their rendition of creation day’s initial chaos, itself contextualized through examination of other depictions: those of *prima materia* in the *Bibles moralisées* produced in Paris over the course of the thirteenth century; in chapter 3, miniatures of the creation of the cosmos from the four elements, dating from the eleventh to the thirteenth century; and, finally, depictions of various types of stones used in making mineral pigments for the decoration of manuscripts.

Prime Matter and Quintessence

What are the potential sources for the painter’s choice to illuminate “chaos” but not the chaos as a combination of four colors (white, black, red and blue) presented in wildly mixed brushstrokes? A series of frontispieces made for the *Bibles moralisées* can help answer this question.⁴¹ These often heavily illuminated picture *Bibles*

40 See Steppe, “Jheronimus Bosch”; Vandenbroeck, “Jheronimus Bosch”; Vandenbroeck, *Jheronimus Bosch*; Wirth, “Le ‘Jardin des délices’ de Jérôme Bosch”; Belting, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 20–22.

41 The single volumes are kept in Vienna (Mss. 1179 and 2554), London (Ms. Add. 18719), and Paris (BnF, Mss. fr. 166 and 167). Two multi-volume sets are divided between Toledo, New York (a quire is kept as Ms. M. 240), and Oxford (Bodleian Library, Ms. Bodley 270b), Paris (BnF, Ms. Lat. 11560), and London (BL, Mss. Harley 1526, 1527). For an overview of their scholarship see Lowden, *Making of the Bibles Moralisées*. Haussherr, *Bible moralisée*, 30, follows Branner, *Manuscript Painting in Paris*, in (convincingly) arguing for dating the Toledo manuscript to ca. 1230 and the two Viennese manuscripts to the 1220s. Lowden, *Making of the Bibles Moralisées*, 50–54, follows this dating. Haussherr, *Bible moralisée*, 32, points out that the earliest possible date for the manuscript we are considering here is 1219, when the interdiction against studying civil law was issued in Paris in Honorius III’s papal bull *Super speculam*. In its explanation of the interdiction, the bull contains a paraphrase of the biblical quote that in the *Bible moralisée* is applied to both civil and canonical law. See also *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. Denifle, 1.90–93, no. 32. Aside from Haussherr’s above-mentioned observation, there is no reliable dating for any of these four Bibles; see Haussherr, *Bible moralisée*, 403. For Toledo the *terminus post quem* is presumed to be 1234 because of the coat of arms in medallion D of fol. 78 in Toledo II, which shows the House of Champagne and the House of Navarra separately, although they united in 1234. Philippe Büttner, however, has suggested that

moralisées juxtapose episodes from the Old and New Testament, as well as various other scenes, while providing extensive commentary moralizing these typological comparisons (hence the name). Produced for the most part in Paris from the 1220s to the 1280s, they begin with rich frontispieces depicting Genesis, and some provide biblical passages translated into the vernacular. While originally single or multi-volume, these bibles are presently dispersed across thirteen manuscripts in Vienna, London, and Paris;⁴² Toledo and New York;⁴³ and Oxford, Paris, and London.⁴⁴ The most prominent *Bibles moralisées* begin with a depiction of God designing the world on the first folio, even before the days of creation cycles begin. These lavish full-page frontispieces can now be found in the two manuscripts in Vienna (fig. 2.12), the Oxford-Paris-London copy in the Bodleian Library (fig. 2.13), and in the first of three volumes of the Toledo-New York copy (also called the Bible of St. Louis) kept in the cathedral of apart of one quire kept in New York (fig. 2.14).

The most prominent expression of this formula, depicting chaos and unmixed color as prime matter, is found in the frontispieces of the two manuscripts in Vienna (fig. 2.11 and fig. 2.12); in those of two three-volume manuscripts – the so-called *Biblia rica* (Toledo I–III, with a quire preserved in the Pierpont Morgan Library; fig. 2.14); and the three volumes of the same manuscript in Oxford, Paris, and London.⁴⁵

In what is arguably the most famous example, the Cod. 2554 frontispiece in Vienna (fig. 2.11), God the Creator is shown in front of as yet unshaped matter. We are invited to interpret this mass as the world about to receive the imprint of divine thought, as a kind of *prima materia* in the process of taking form. However, it is surprisingly unclear what exactly the Creator is doing here. In his right hand is a compass, but gripped so far up that we can barely imagine he has just finished using it to draw the circle enclosing the cosmos.⁴⁶ The instrument's knobbed

the disjunction could constitute a reference to Thibaud IV (d. 1253). The chansonnier from Champagne had courted Blanche of Castile. Her servants broke the coat of arms to prepare for his arrival. Based on a careful reading of the coat of arms, Büttner proposes two possible dates – before 1234 or after 1254; see Büttner, *Bilder zum Betreten der Zeit*, 88. Lowden, *Making of the Bibles Moralisées*, 201, suggests that Vienna Cod. 2554 is the earliest, likely commissioned by Blanche in the 1220s. Vienna 1179 was made shortly afterwards, perhaps for Louis IX by the same craftsmen.

42 Vienna: Mss. 1179 and 2554; London: Ms. Add. 18719; Paris: BnF, Mss. fr. 166 and 167.

43 A quire of the last volume of Toledo, or the so-called *Biblia rica*, is kept as MS M.240.

44 Oxford: Bodleian Library, Ms. Bodley 270b; Paris: BnF, Ms. Lat. 11560; London: BL, Mss. Harley 1526, 1527.

45 Hausscherr, *Bible moralisée*; Guest, *Bible Moralisée*; Lowden, *Making of the Bibles Moralisées*. The literature on these manuscripts is abundant: for a good overview, see Hellemans, *La Bible moralisée*, 202–211. Although she does not mention the important study by Stork, *Die Wiener französische Bible moralisée*, Stork's conclusions about typology, allegory, the reading of the illustrations as a pictorial commentary, and the hermeneutics of the manuscript's reception are similar to those of Hellemans.

46 The instrument that the Paris illuminator responsible for this *Bible moralisée* placed in God's hand in the 1220s not only points to the legacy of the relevant contemporary debates for artists and their creations

handle (still visible) is a little to the side of the axis of the compass leg piercing the center. This indicates a bent handle, which would have further complicated the movement of the hand drawing a circular line with the other leg of the compass. Meanwhile, in his left hand God is holding the cosmos like a disk or ball that he is about to roll. In comparison to the other frontispieces showing this scene, the Creator's grip seems far too insecure as he tentatively grips the cosmos from the side. If natural laws are already valid for what the Creator has just made in this picture, the ball would have to either be very light or in fact not a ball at all, just a flat disk. But what speaks against *both* possibilities of a very light ball or a disk is what can be seen in the circle's interior: some yellow matter, not yet shaped, clotted in an irregular mass.

In the frontispiece of the Vienna manuscript (fig. 2.11) we see two bodies of light already possessing a spheroid form: the globes visible inside the divinely held disk, slightly above and on either side of the irregular, unshaped yellow mass. On the left is a red-and-white striped globe appearing further away, and on the right is a yellowish globe that appears somewhat closer as it seems to overlap the irregular mass at the center. All around the unshaped mass (and possibly below it if looking from above) the view into the interior of the disk reveals at least eight further astral bodies, flashing red. While the disk's outer edge is depicted in yellow, perfectly calm and straight, the actual opening into the interior is shown as a blue-and-white zone with ragged borders or rampant protrusions. This contour finally makes it clear that this was meant as a three-dimensional globe, not a disk. The creator himself is dressed in a red coat over a long dark-blue robe. He is performing a balancing act: his left leg rests on the frame's edge, while the other leg, seemingly weightless, dangles below the frame as though it were not a frame at all.

We can read this detail as a metaphor for the painter's balancing act between parallel iconographic traditions: traditions that call for the earth to be depicted as either a disk or a globe, and for the cosmos to have either the sun or the earth at its center (surrounded by the eight spheres of the Aristotelian cosmos).⁴⁷ He shows the Creator next to and above, looking down upon a yellowish clump of matter that has not yet taken form but out of which, within a space that is still dark, individual bodies of light have already received a shape or are about to take

but also to the compass's own considerable ancestry. See Marer-Banasik, "The Creator with the Cosmos"; Friedman, "The Architect's Compass"; Tachau, "God's Compass and *Vana Curiositas*"; Reudenbach, "Wie Gott anfängt"; Worm, "Das illuminierte Wort"; Rudolph, "In the Beginning."

47 For an excellent overview of the scholastic discussion of the different spheres see Lerner, *Le monde des sphères*. Barbara Obrist, "Corporeal and Spiritual Celestial Spheres," extensively discussed diagrammatic illustrations of the spheres surrounding the earth and unpacked the embedded cosmological knowledge; and Jeffrey Hamburger, "Drawing Conclusions," the potential of diagrammatic representations as a "matrix for the making and meaning of Christian images in the Middle Ages."

shape, formed from *prima materia* according to the Creator's ideas. He is depicted with his mouth open, as if about to form or having just formed the words to give the ideas visible shape.

But do we actually see a depiction of *prima materia*? As I have outlined, the ancient concept of prime matter was meant to answer the question of what existed before creation, and was reintroduced in the Middle Ages during intensifying scholastic efforts to integrate ancient thought into the Christian account of creation. Integrating an idea so steeped in Aristotelian thought at the core of a biblical frontispiece would surely have been a delicate endeavor. Furthermore, theologians had provided different answers to the same problem; and, in most cases, also a different term to describe that concept. We should note that translations of the ancient Greek *chora* (used by Plato) and *hyle* (used in Aristotle) used a range of Latin terms, including *prima materia*, *substantia*, and *silva* – that last expression being the one introduced by Calcidius in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* (section 53c), which had shaped the Western reception of Platonic thought.⁴⁸ (As indicated, the few partial translations of the Aristotelian texts before Moerbeke's were mostly unreliable texts or retranslations.) William of Conches's *Glossa* and Bernard of Chartres's *Glosae* were essential milestones in the convergence between the Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of prime matter as both authors discussed the nature of prime matter at the beginning of creation in great detail.⁴⁹

To gain a better sense of what the amorphous mass in the Vienna Bible actually is, it is helpful to consider some additional intellectual history. In his treatise on primordial matter, Bernard of Chartres first discusses the paternal and maternal contributions to generation, drawing a distinction between matter (*hyle*) and the wax (*cera*) used in the making of a statue, and identifying *hyle* as the principal "cause," relating it to God's idea (as having been there first).⁵⁰ Bernard then elaborates on the four elements, their mixture and instability, and their impact on perception. He next turns his mind to the question of how (invisible) ideas – the so-called *species* (particles conveying visual information) – are related to visible *simulacra*. Bernard refers explicitly to Calcidius; but, even if he had not, his source would be evident: it is not animation but the relation of inner idea and visible form that is at the core of his interest; no fifth element or other animating force comes into

48 See Iamblichus, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta*. For the Greek tradition, the most prominent commentaries were those of Proclus and Galen.

49 Leinkauf and Steel, *Platons Timaios*.

50 Bernard of Chartres, *Tractatus de primordiali materia*, ll. 17–22, 217–218: "Maior tamen usus habet ex hyle fieri omnia corpora, non in hyle, nisi sic in hyle dicantur fieri, ut in cera statua, quae tamen est ex cera, quod ueri similius est. Erit igitur hyle quasi pater, secundum hoc quod assumptis formis transit in corpus; quasi mater, secundum hoc quod in se recipit formas. Et secundum quod pater, principalis causa erit corporum post deum et ideas; secundum quod mater, secundaria causa."

play; and he uses *statua* and *simulacrum* instead of the words *essence*, *substance*, and *idol*, which will later gain currency with the intense reception of Aristotelian thought and Averroes's ideas in European centers of learning.

Indeed, from a manuscript preserved at Paris that includes the *Clavis physicae* by Honorius Augustodunensis (fig. 2.15),⁵¹ it becomes clear that what we see both there and in the *Bible moralisées* is *materia informis* – matter that has not yet been shaped. The full-page miniature in the *Clavis physicae* draws upon the cosmic vision of John Scottus Eriugena (d. ca. 877, an Irish scholar working at the court of Charles the Bold), partially modified by thoughts taken from Calcidius's *Timaeus* commentary.⁵² The illustration is arranged on four levels, from top to bottom. The topmost level is made up of a half circle enclosing seven virtues (*iusticia*, *virtus*, *ratio*, *veritas*, *essentia*, *vita*, and *sapientia*) surrounding crowned goodness (*bonitas*) in the center. The next level is composed of three circles: at its center, bearing the visible puncture mark of the compass needle, is *materia informis*, a brown dough with some eyes and portions of four faces; and personifications of time (*tempus*) and space (*locus*) occupy the circles to the left and right, respectively. This second level is labeled *primordiales cause*, while the four elements – the *effectus causarum* (*ignis*, *aer*, *aquae*, *terra*) – are shown in the arcades on the level below.⁵³

The fourth level shows Christ's upper body, enclosed in a slightly smaller half circle than the one on the top level. He has a cross nimbus and clutches the end of a curtain in each hand, as if he is about to draw the curtain and close the presentation about the creation. With the inscription *natura creata – non creans* Honorius refers to the philosophical discussion about the *natura naturata* versus *natura naturans*, to which we will turn shortly. The position articulated with this inscription, followed by *finis* regarding this debate, is that, with the divine creation, the creation of everything is complete – human acts of creativity have already been implemented into the divine plan, and nature (including mankind) is not creative “itself.”

Honorius's *Clavis* may have influenced the conceptual complex we see at work here in the miniature. As the full-page miniature suggests, Honorius was influenced by the often intensely debated ideas of John Scottus, who was intimate with several important Greek texts. Scottus begins his *Periphyseon* (known since the twelfth century under the title *De divisione naturae*) with an interpretation of the first three chapters of Genesis, which he sees as an account of the four stages of human

51 See Gersh, “Honorius Augustodunensis and Eriugena”; Crouse, “Honorius Augustodunensis”; Beierwaltes, *Eriugena redivivus*.

52 D'Alverny, “Le Cosmos symbolique du XIIe siècle,” 57–69, and Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 148, examine the close analogies between the text and the illustration.

53 *Ignis* is not legible; see Honorius Augustodunensis, *Clavis Physicae*, f. 22v, and Johannes Scoti Erigenae, *De divisione naturae*, 495–496. D'Alverny, “Le Cosmos symbolique du XIIe siècle,” 59–60; Schwarzbauer, *Geschichtszeit*.



Fig. 2.15 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Clavis Physicae*, Ms. Lat. 6734, fol. 3v, 1120–1125, ink and pigments on parchment, 19 × 12 cm. Paris (France), Bibliothèque nationale de France.

history. The first stage is life in Paradise, when humans knew and loved God. After the Fall comes the second stage – renunciation of divine knowledge. The third stage, after the expulsion from Paradise, is restricted knowledge about the world. And, reading salvation as a promise already announced in Genesis, Scottus understands a recovery of divine insight as the fourth and final phase of human history.⁵⁴

In his extensive commentary on Genesis, Augustine describes *materia informis* as something created by God in the beginning, prior to or on the first day.⁵⁵ Thomas

54 The illustrator of the *Clavis physicae* includes human beings in his depictions of the four elements, opening the possibility of reflection by viewers on connections between the elements and the four phases.

55 Augustine, *De genesi ad litteram*, lib 1, 14: *Qui fecisti mundum ex materia informi*, 34, 42 (referring to Sap. 11, 15).

Aquinas insists that, for Basil, Ambrose, and John Chrysostom (d. 407), Aristotle's *prima materia* and *materia informis* were not the same. Accordingly, he further differentiates the process of creation. In his view, *materia informis* already had a rudimentary form, and was then given a final form during creation.⁵⁶ In the picture in the *Clavis physicae*, the as yet unshaped something is depicted at the center of the *primordiales causae*, created from nature by God and the beginning of all being. The *causae* having an ordering effect on the manifold forms are still hidden in the *materia informis*, and are also responsible for ordering nature within individual bodies – in other words, generating everything.⁵⁷

As is the case in Vienna's *Bible moralisée*, illustrations revealing self-reflexive thoughts about the actual *process* of creation are generally found in a particularly apt place: at the beginning of the book. Prefacing a manuscript in the form of a frontispiece, a full-page miniature of this kind often condenses many important thoughts into one complex image. In the frontispiece to the Vienna manuscript the formation of the cosmos out of prime matter is unusually explicit: God holding a compass, acting as the primary mover of the cosmos that has not yet fully taken shape. But, because it shows celestial bodies and something like ordered space, what we see within the circle in the frontispiece cannot *only* be *hyle*, *prima materia*, *silva*, or the chaos of the beginning (fig. 2.11). To pose the question again then: What, exactly, is being depicted here?

The overhead inscription gives us a clue: "Here God is creating the heavens, and the earth, and the sun, and all the elements."⁵⁸ The inscription thus refers to the fourth day, the day when, precisely, the stars are added to the firmament and the sun and moon are created. Comparing this scene with the "actual" depiction of the fourth day two pages later in the same manuscript, we see that the frontispiece does not, in fact, offer a depiction of that day: the wording of Genesis makes perfectly clear that the stars, sun, and moon were only created after chaos had been turned into order (fig. 2.16). What is particularly unusual here is the addition of the words "and all the elements" at the end of the inscription. This reveals an effort to combine the biblical accounts of the cosmic creation with the ancient idea that it was created out of the four elements (see chapter 3).

The inscription to the Latin *Bible moralisée* (Cod. 1179, fig. 2.12) – also kept in Vienna and closely related to the French copy (Cod. 2554, fig. 2.11) – likewise points to the elements, but this time though hexameter verse: "Here the sole maker of the universe arranges each separate [element]"; "Here arranges the sole potter [*figulus*]

⁵⁶ Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's Divine Comedy*, 41 and 201f., n. 8.

⁵⁷ Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 148.

⁵⁸ "ICI CRIE DEX CIEL ET TERRE SOLEIL ET LUNE ET TOZ ELEMENZ." For a reconstruction of the original order of the quires and the number of missing leaves see Büttner, *Bilder zum Betreten der Zeit*, 22–25.

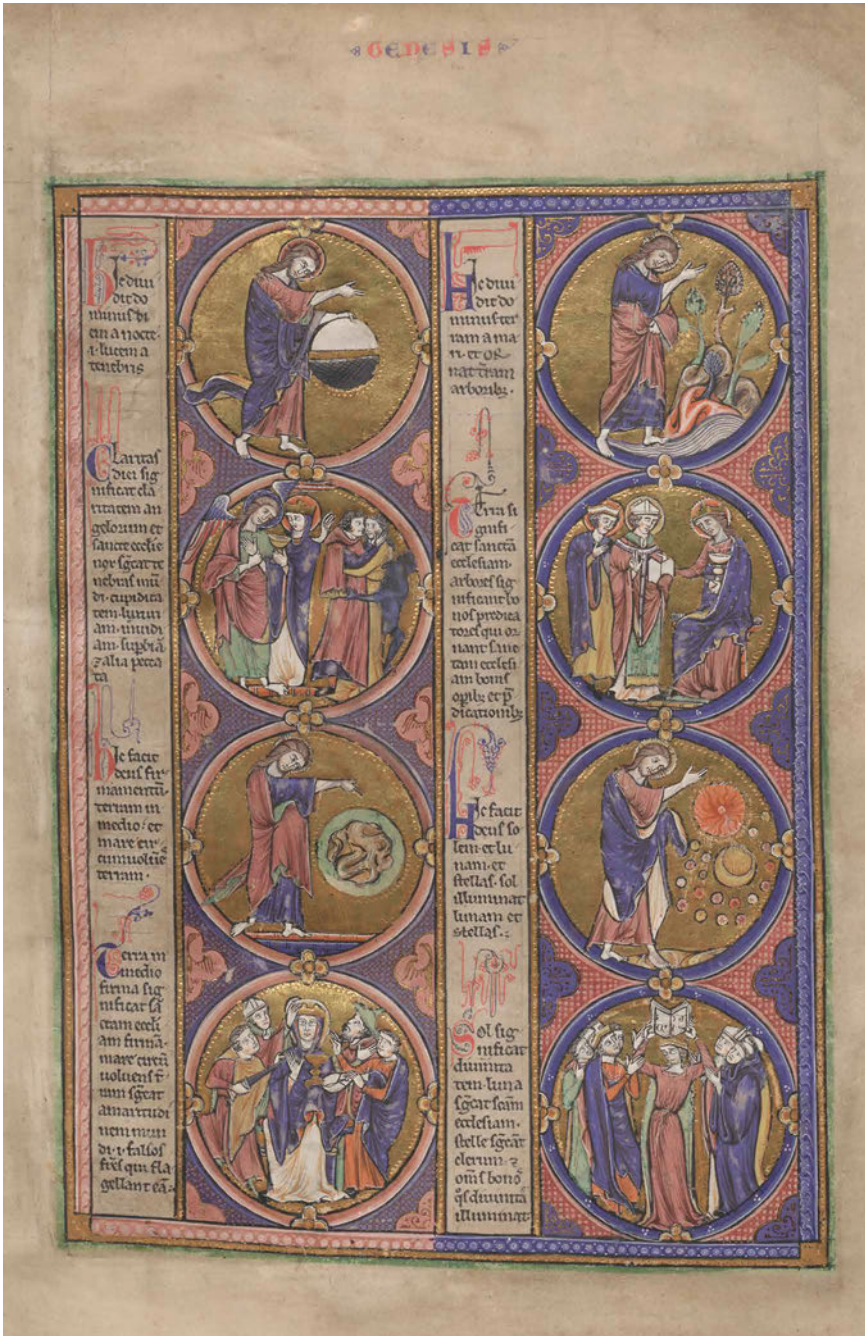


Fig. 2.16 Creation of the cosmos, day 1–4 (first and third medallion in both columns). *Bible moralisée*, Cod. 1179, fol. 6r, Paris (France), ca. 1230, ink, pigments and gold leaf on parchment, 43 × 29.5 cm, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

all single [elements of] the world.”⁵⁹ In the frontispiece of the first volume of both the Latin Toledo Bible and its sister manuscript in the British Library (Bodleian 270b) the first words of the Vulgate’s Genesis – *In principio creavit deus celum et terram* – are inscribed above God on his throne.⁶⁰

For its part, in the frontispiece of the Toledo/New York Bible (fig. 2.14) the artist has chosen a specific kind of matter for the center of the cosmos. The reddish-brown mass resembles *cipollino rosso* or some other kind of marble, with a strong color contrast and sliding striation.⁶¹ This is the type of stone that Albertus Magnus will describe a couple of years later as offering insight into a painting of God, frozen in stone and only made visible when cut open, like a snapshot of divine creativity.⁶² But here we are presented not with a nature painting but with the earth shaped by the Creator, the other three elements (fire, water, and air) also being present. This inclusion of all four elements is significant because it points to a backdrop of new ideas about creation.

While the Creator in the French *Bible moralisée* (fig. 2.11) swings his free leg while still keeping his balance, the interior of the cosmos is independently seething. It is not only being put into order by God, but is also about to order and differentiate *itself*. A. P. Bos has argued that in medieval thought the act of creation also affects and does something for the creation; in other words, new possibilities and problems show themselves to the creator.⁶³ However this reciprocity, important for interpretation of the manuscript’s frontispiece, has been broadly neglected by art historians. The Creator’s empty gaze, either into something fully in his thoughts or moving past the image’s frame to something he does not deign to look at while

59 “HIC ORBIS FIGULUS DISPONIT SINGULA SOLUS.” Translation BF. for Cod. Lat. 1179; see also Büttner, *Bilder zum Betreten der Zeit*, 27–34.

60 Büttner, *Bilder zum Betreten der Zeit*, 41–42.

61 The texts and miniatures in the Toledo *Bible moralisée* (before 1234) and the Paris-Oxford-London *Bible moralisée* (after 1234) are so closely related that Hausscherr, *Bible moralisée*, 30, presumes that one must have been the model for the other or that both hark back to a lost third copy. Heimann, “Six Days of Creation,” has convincingly argued that the Viennese manuscript copies a scene from the Toledo manuscript illustrating Jeremiah 13:1–11. As already noted, Hausscherr follows Branner in convincingly arguing for a date of around 1230 for the Toledo manuscript and the 1220s for the two Viennese manuscripts (see note 41 above).

62 Albertus Magnus, *De mineralibus*, l. II, 3, c. 1, 48–49 (written ca. 1251–1254): “Dico igitur, quod me essente Venetiis, cum essem juvenis, incidebantur marmora per serras ad parietes templi orandos: contigit autem in uno marmore jam inciso, tabulis incisus sibi applicatis, apparere depictum caput pulcherrimum regis cum corona et longa barba: neque in aliquo peccare videbatur pictura, nisi in hoc solo quod frontem videbatur in medio habere nimis alta ascendentem versus verticem capitis. Scivimus autem omnes qui aderamus, hoc a natura fuisse pictum in lapide. Et cum a me quaereretur causa inordinationis frontis, dixi lapidem illum ex vapore fuisse coagulatum, et in medio per calorem fortiolem vaporem inordinate ascendisse ultra modum.”

63 Bos, *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology*.

creating, would offer a further argument – one drawing an analogy between the act of cosmic creation and the creation of images.

Both *Bible moralisée* manuscripts in Vienna provide the beholder with illuminations on the adjacent manuscript page which not only reveal a close relationship with the frontispiece but also, according to Aden Kumler, provide us with a “metonymic distillation of the hermeneutic situation of the volume as the whole,” showing a personification holding up an empty book (fig. 2.17).⁶⁴ In Vienna’s Latin *Bible moralisée* (Cod. 1179, fig. 2.18) Philippe Büttner, John Lowden, and Silke Tammen have pointed to a juxtaposition between the Divine Creator on the frontispiece and, at the very end of the manuscript, the last two scenes, which show a bearded king and the scribe or illuminator of the manuscript himself.⁶⁵ Here, both figures hold open books that, in contrast to the empty pages held by other figures in the manuscript, are decorated with a similar pattern of roundels seen in the folio itself. For Büttner, the king is responding with bowed head to the frontispiece’s creator. This miniature image showing a scribe who has written the book of the world, a work originating with measurement, now reveals the same striking correspondence between the first and final miniatures we will encounter again in the Hamburg Bible (to which we will return soon).⁶⁶

In both these *Bible moralisée* frontispieces, we can see an interesting addition that further connects them to the Hamburg Bible: the angels are active participants in the creation. Büttner has noted a significant parallel in a miniature of the manuscript’s third (final) volume now in Toledo (fig. 2.14).⁶⁷ Here, in the St. Louis Bible, we are presented with a queen and king (possibly Blanche of Castile and Louis IV of France) accompanied in the lower register by two craftsmen – a cleric as scribe and a miniaturist (fig. 2.19).⁶⁸ Büttner sees this image as offering a meaningful parallel to the angels found on the frontispiece. However, in all four frontispieces of the *Bible moralisée* manuscripts, the four elements are clearly separated and not chaotically mixed as in the Hamburg Bible. These manuscripts offer valuable insight into the illumination of the four elements and the idea of *prima materia* in the production of courtly manuscripts. As we will encounter again

64 Kumler, *Translating Truth*, 16.

65 See Lowden, *Making of the Bible Moralisées*, 50f., Tachau, “The King in the Manuscript,” and Büttner, *Bilder zum Betreten der Zeit*, 28–29, 66–67, 102–104, 110, and 128–138 (especially on the connection between the first and last illuminations with regard to self-representation of the scribe/illuminator); and Tammen, “Schluß und Genese,” 339–342.

66 Büttner, *Bilder zum Betreten der Zeit*, 29, makes this observation.

67 The three volumes of the Biblia rica or St. Louis Bible are kept at the cathedral of Toledo, apart from one quire held in the Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.240 (see note 43 above). The depiction of the royal couple and the two craftsmen is on the last page of the quire in New York (MS M.240, fol. 8r).

68 Büttner, *Bilder zum Betreten der Zeit*, 101–110.



Fig. 2.17 Creation of the cosmos, day 1–4 (first and third medallion in both columns). *Bible moralisée*, Cod. 2554, fol. 6r, Paris (France), 1230s, parchment, 34.5 × 26 cm, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

in the Hamburg Bible, the illuminator is included in the illumination's decorative program, foregrounding a relationship between the depiction of the creation and the craftsman himself.



Fig. 2.18 Bearded king and the scribe or illuminator of the manuscript. *Bible moralisée*, Cod. 1179, fol. 246r, Paris (France), ca. 1230, ink, pigments and gold leaf on parchment, 43 × 29.5 cm, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.



Fig. 2.19 Queen and king (possibly Blanche of Castile and Louis IV of France), accompanied in the lower register by two craftsmen – a cleric as scribe and a miniaturist. *Toledo-New York Bible/St. Louis Bible/Biblia moralisée*, MS 240, fol. 8r, Paris (France), 1227–1234, ink, pigments, and gold leaf on vellum, 37.5 × 26.2 cm, New York, The Morgan Library & Museum.

Prima Materia

While Eastern theological commentaries on Genesis included the four elements early on, their basis being Basil's *Hexaemeron*, in the West the Venerable Bede (d. 735) was the pioneer in this respect. In his later works, Bede postulates that *prima materia*, consisting of all four elements, was created before the first day. Alcuin of York (d. 804) considers the four elements to be hidden in *materia informis*, which provided the material given shape in the six days of creation.⁶⁹ As Johannes Zählten has shown, the number of commentaries on Genesis peaked in the twelfth century and engaged with various interpretive traditions regarding creation. In this respect, the commentaries of both Honorius and Hugo of Amiens, together with those emerging from Paris, all have their intellectual roots in Bede.⁷⁰

Authors in these circles, especially from the context of the Augustinian abbey of Saint-Victor in Paris, drew upon Bede's idea that heaven and earth were created together with the four elements, and that order was established only afterwards.⁷¹ Their ideas are essential for understanding the frontispieces of the *Bibles moralisées* created in Paris. Authors writing in that context were increasingly critical of Plato's *Timaeus* and Augustinian premises, and instead engaged with Aristotelian ideas about creation and the cosmos.⁷² They still agreed on the idea that the four elements were created at the same time, but rejected the idea of *materia informis* (matter that had yet to be given shape) in favor of *prima materia* (matter that can be subject to substantial transformation), including an individual being, a subject capable of perception, cognition, and creation.⁷³ This prime matter was only the basis for earthly beings; the celestial bodies, which were imperishable, were not made from it.

Thierry of Chartres, a twelfth-century theologian famous for his elaborations on cosmology and still known for his espousal of Plato's *Timaeus*, includes the four elements in his commentary on the events of day one of the creation. This commentary is an important contribution to the scholastic reception of the Aristotelian critique of the theory of the four elements. According to Aristotle, something must animate the elements and cause their movement, for which he introduces the

69 Alcuin of York, *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesim*. Here Alcuin draws on Bede, rejecting Augustine's idea of simultaneous creation, itself based on Isidore of Seville's cosmographical arguments as expressed in *Quaestiones veteris ac novi Testamenti*. See Zählten, *Creatio mundi*, 92–93.

70 Honorius Augustodunensis, *Hexaemeron*; Hugo of Amiens, "Tractatus in Hexameron."

71 For example, Hugh of St. Victor, *Adnotationes elucidatoriae in Pentateuch*.

72 For the wider context see Lutz-Bachmann et al., *Metaphysics in the Twelfth Century*.

73 Zählten, *Creatio mundi*, 94; Dronke, "New Approaches to the School of Chartres"; Liebeschütz, "Chartres und Bologna"; Mangenot, "Héxameron." For a critical follow-up to Richard Southern's question as to whether the Chartres school ever existed, see Jeuneau, *Rethinking the School of Chartres*.

principle of *aether*.⁷⁴ In Thierry's medieval reception, *aether* becomes the *quinta essentia*, the fifth element. He argues that matter immediately started to move in circles, a process during which fire ascended, turning into the highest element and illuminating the air. However, the frontispiece of the Vienna *Bible moralisée* includes a second movement – one that originates with the Creator and cannot be explained by this theory.

Conrad Rudolph has shed light on the fact that most attempts to interpret this frontispiece have aimed to relate it to a concrete passage in the Bible mentioning a compass. Rudolph suggests an alternative: that the frontispiece “be thought of on an overt level as the depiction of the beginning of time at the moment of simultaneous creation, before the first day, according to Augustinian thought, with God creating formless matter and bending over it to set it into cosmic motion with his own hand.”⁷⁵ It seems to me inviting not only to follow Rudolph's argument but to go one step further: what Rudolph analyzes is primarily the twelfth-century reception of Plato's *Timaeus* and relationships with illustrations of Genesis. I think, however, that what is represented in this frontispiece is more than just a visualization of a Platonic idea. Rather, in line with what I have already argued, this artwork is a “pictorial” reflection and an attempt to bridge two conflicting approaches by the illuminator going back to opposing positions of Plato and Aristotle, a conflict of which scholars had become acutely aware in the thirteenth century. In this period, scholars and theologians did not simply read Genesis in order to compare Christian and ancient pagan ideas about the world's creation. Rather, there was an effort to combine these ideas into a single coherent system. I would like to argue that this exegetical process also unfolds visually in illuminations. The images negotiate passive versus active roles of the Creator and embed them as pictorial comments about creativity.

The Vienna frontispiece demonstrates this search for a coherent system quite clearly. The four Empedoclean elements – air, fire, earth, and water – and the ancient tensions between Platonic and Aristotelian ideas about the creation of the cosmos are insufficient to describe conflicting new ideas such as the opposition of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, or questions concerning the origin and differences between divine creativity and human creativity.

To more fully understand the Vienna miniature we need to consider two further dimensions. The first is the reception of the Platonic *Idea* – a reception strongly informed by Calcidius's exposition of *hyle* and *silva* that had already assimilated

74 Aristotle, *De caelo libri quattuor*, I, 3; Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione* II, 2f. *Aether* is the first element according to its characteristics (Aristotle, *Meteor.* I, 3; *De generatione et corruptione*, II, 3) but the fifth in terms of number.

75 Rudolph, “In the Beginning,” 38.

some Aristotelian ideas, for example in respect to how the site of cosmic generation was to be imagined.⁷⁶ The second is the possible influence of Aristotelian ideas on this creation image. In their combination with Christian theological premises, the wording of the Book of Genesis, the four Empedoclean elements that Plato uses in his arguments are in themselves insufficient to describe what is depicted in this frontispiece. But with the addition of *aether*, the element Aristotle uses to explain the motion of the celestial bodies, the wavy lines we find in the globe's outermost space finally make sense.⁷⁷ They refer to the differences between movements in the outermost sphere, the movements of the planets, and those caused by generative processes in the zone of the four elements. I would therefore like to maintain that the Creator's double activity, the balancing act described earlier, should be seen against the backdrop of the Aristotelian critique of Plato – of Plato's presumption of the Creator's (demiurge's) possible passivity: having in mind ideas for the creation of the cosmos and setting this creation with the help of the soul of the world, the *anima mundi/ψυχή τοῦ παντός*, enabling the Divine Creator to provide these ideas with a shape, the formation of their physical appearance.

The Vienna picture, it seems to me, is best interpreted as a visualization of this critique. In the last book of *Physics* and book twelve of *Metaphysics* Aristotle argues that the Creator – the unmoved mover or prime mover (*primum movens* ὁ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, “that which moves without being moved” – is active not only in the course of contemplation but also while establishing order in the cosmos and creating the earth. The emphasis in the frontispiece illumination of the French *Bible moralisée* lies particularly in the activity of the Divine Creator, not in his capacity to have an idea. His body is shown in multiple movements, his fingers actively interacting with his creation and using the tool representing the *artifex* – the tool medieval beholders would relate to the work of an architect. According to Bos, this critique is grounded in Plato's demiurge in *Timaeus*: For Aristotle, the world's creation necessarily implies an element of mutability in the notion of a divine entity, inasmuch as the transition from chaos to order, if effected by such an entity, implies a transition from non-ordering to ordering activity on its part.⁷⁸

76 Calcidius, *Commentarius*, 341: “Imago enim ex arte facta et iuxta archetypam speciem effigiata nisi habeat siluam – si quidem erit pictura, colores, si autem fictura, limum uel aes ceteramque huius modi supellectilem – carebit certa perfectione. Igitur, quia sesiles quoque species imagines sunt specierum intellegibilium, sicut saepe iam diximus, et ab intellegibilibus substantiam trahunt, nec substantiam modo, sed etiam similitudinem, opus est his, opinor, silua, in qua fiant et substantiam sortiantur.”

77 See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, for the use of *pempton stoicheion*, which Latin authors later refer to as “quintessence” (*quinta essentia*).

78 See Bos, *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology*, 181: “The most fundamental opposition between Aristotle and Plato was Aristotle's rejection of the Platonic view that the supreme god is not only active in contemplation, but also in ordering and creating the world. The debate between these two masters of Greek philosophy came to hinge upon the figure of the Demiurge or Worldmaker as portrayed by Plato

Four Elements

But how did medieval natural philosophers imagine the creation of the cosmos out of the four elements?⁷⁹ Few other illuminations of Genesis present a pictorial formula as forceful as the Vienna example for representing the chaos or nothingness from which God generates the world. However, two examples from eleventh-century Spain, the Roda and Ripoll Bibles (fig. 2.20 and fig. 2.21), provide us with another important part of this story.⁸⁰ Both codices were illuminated in the Benedictine abbey of Santa Maria de Ripoll (Girona) under the abbot Oliva (d. 1046). Manuel Castiñeiras has persuasively suggested that the illuminators tried “to establish the First Day of the Creation by means of a conceptualized representation of the passage through Chaos to Cosmos.”⁸¹ The original word for “chaos” in Genesis 1:2 is the Hebrew *tehom*, the *abyss(us)* in the Latin Vulgate and ἄβυσσος in the Greek Septuagint, out of which the ordered world was created. Castiñeiras also shows that, in departing from the depiction of the “abyss” as masked (like the Roman personification of Oceanos), the illumination displays roots in Hesiod’s *Theogony*. Additionally, Castiñeiras draws convincing connections to Platonic exegetical readings of the creation’s first day, such as William of Conches’s *Philosophia mundi*,⁸² where primordial chaos is defined as a kind of confusion of the four elements.⁸³

in his *Timaeus*.” Aristotle, *De caelo libri quattuor*, I, 10, 280a7–9 in relation to Plato, *Timaeus*, 30a5. For traces of Aristotle’s criticism as expressed in his lost writings see Pépin, *Théologie cosmique*, 257–263; Effe, *Kosmologie und Theologie*, 23–31.

79 Goetz, *Gott und die Welt*, 39–57.

80 Castiñeiras, “From Chaos to Cosmos”; Contessa, “Between Art, Faith and Science”; Sherman, “Observations on the Genesis Iconography.”

81 The two bibles were made in the second quarter of the eleventh century under abbot Oliva (1008–1046). Their most striking elements are the absence of the Creator from the depiction of the cosmic creation and the use of an abstract, allegorical artistic language recalling, in the words of Castiñeiras, “From Chaos to Cosmos,” 35, “the way Platonic cosmology was taught at schools.” Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, Mentré, “Éléments bibliques et non bibliques,” and Obrist, “Le diagramme isidorien des saisons,” 157f., already pointed out that the representation of the cosmic circle goes back to the elemental theory propounded by Bede and Isidore, which received new attention with the rising interest in Aristotelian thought.

82 See Ellard, *The Sacred Cosmos*.

83 William of Conches, *Philosophia mundi*, I, 21: “Fuerunt in prima creatione ubi nunc sunt, sed non qualia nunc sunt. Etenim terra omnino cooperta erat aquis, aqua vero spissior quam modo sit et ad magnam partem aeris elevata; aer autem spissior quam modo sit et obscurior, quippe cum neque sol neque luna neque aliae stellae essent, quibus illuminaretur. Ignis similiter spissior erat quam modo sit. Id vero quod terra erat aquis omnino cooperta nec aliquo lumine illustrata nec aedificiis distincta nec suis animalibus repleta; quod aqua et aer spissi et obscuri erant; quod in superioribus stellae non apparebant vocaverunt chaos, i. e. confusionem elementorum. Unde Moyses: ‘Terra erat inanis et vacua et tenebrae super faciem abyssi’. Hoc chaos sic et dissolutum: cum aqua usque ad maximam partem aeris esset elevata, aer vero spissus et ignis similiter, in ea spissitudine aliquid terreae substantiae et aquae inerat, quae ex calore ignis et siccitate coagulata et durata corpora stellarum visibilia et lucida creavit.”

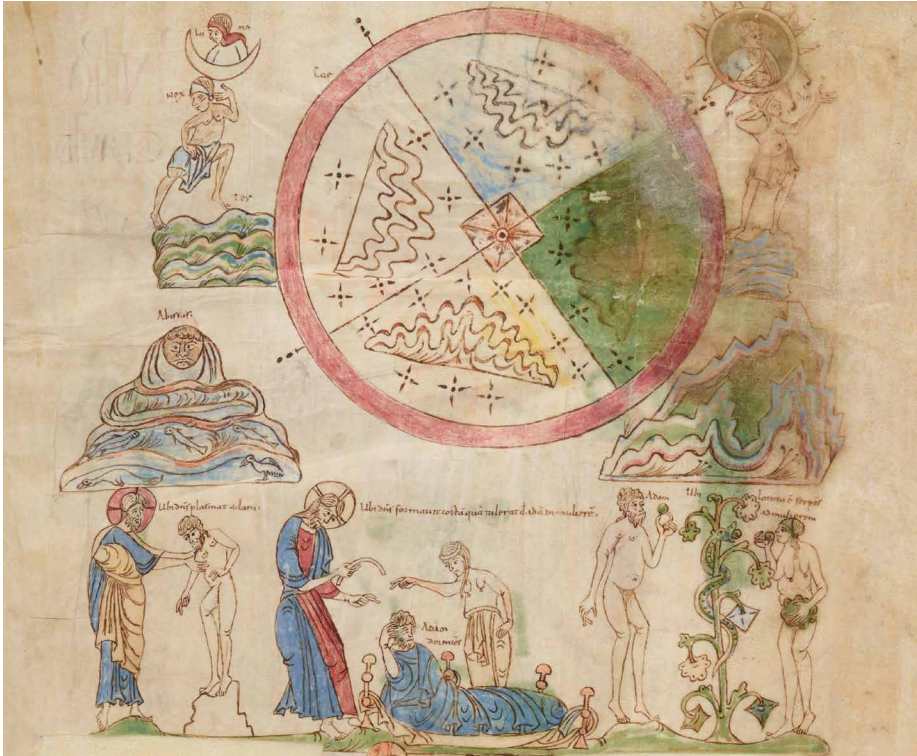


Fig. 2.20 Creation of the cosmos from the four elements, luna and sol, lower register, creation of man, creation of Eve, Fall of Man. *Roda Bible*, Ms. Lat. 6, fol. 6r, Spain, 11th c., ink and pigments on parchment, 48 x 33.5 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Furthermore, Castiñeiras emphasizes the importance of abbot Oliva's commentary on *Timaeus*, where Oliva explains the meaning of the Latin term *silva* using the phrase by Chalcidius in his commentary to explain the Greek *hyle* (chaos). Their definition corresponds to the caption in the Catalan representation, and equally helps explain the explicit presence of animals there: "There is nothing in this whole world that does not contain animals, so that it can be understood, he made an emulation (imitation/painting), through which we understand."⁸⁴

The inscription at the top of the full-page miniature in the Ripoll Bible reads *Abyssus retinens in se cuncta creata*: "The abyss holding back in itself what was created." Castiñeiras observes that the use of the present participle *retinens* (holding back) and the past participle *creata* reveals that the four elements were

84 Chalcidius, *Platonis Timaeus*, 13 (verse also quoted by Oliva): "Nisi quod nondum hic mundus cuncta continebat animalia perinde ut intellegibilis, ad cuius aemulationem fiebat."



Fig. 2.21 Abyss, creation of the cosmos from the four elements, personifications of luna and sol (upper register), creation of man, fall of man (second register), admonition and expulsion of paradise (lower register). *Ripoll Bible*, Ms. Vat. lat. 5729, fol. 5v. Monastery of S. Maria in Ripoll (Spain), 1015–1020, ink and pigment on parchment, 55 × 37 cm, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

already created, and are being retained by the abyss. According to Chalcidius, who established the medieval understanding of the Platonic approach to creation and matter, the relationship between matter, craftsman, creation, and God is as follows:

Matter, then, being that which receives all incidental attributes in itself, is called “void” in the sense that it appears incapable of ever being filled, and it is called “nothing” because it is devoid of all things. By Symmachus, however, it is called “inert” and “disordered”: “inert,” in the sense that of itself it is incapable of doing anything; and it is considered “disordered” in that it has the aptitude for receiving



Fig. 2.22a Abyss, detail of fig. 2.20. *Roda Bible*, Ms. Lat. 6, fol. 6r, Spain, 11th c., ink and pigments on parchment, 48 × 33.5 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

order from God, who in building the world adorns it. The phrase, “in a state of dumb admiration,” on the other hand, identifies a certain power of or likeness to soul, since it was struck dumb by the majesty of its craftsman and maker. But if a previously formless corporeal matter which Scripture calls “earth” was made by God, then, I suppose, there is no need for despair concerning there having been an intelligible matter of the incorporeal kind as well, which is given the name “heaven.” And the view that it was made, and made in such a way that there exists matter which did not exist, they defend as follows: matter is bestowed ready-made upon mortal craftsmen by other craftsmen, and upon the latter by nature, upon nature by God, and upon God by no one, since nothing is prior to God; thus *He* fashioned building materials that were sufficiently and suitably calibrated to the fabrication of the world.⁸⁵

Thus far we have considered the two illuminations as depicting the same aspects of the creation; but the few yet distinct differences between them are equally important. In both the *Roda Bible* (fig. 2.22a) and the *Ripoll Bible* (fig. 2.22b) the abyss is shown in four colors, referring to the four elements and four connected qualities – for example, the fish are a sign of the element water and the birds of the element air.⁸⁶ In the *Ripoll Bible* (fig. 2.21), we first see the primordial *abyssus* and beside it a circle divided in four spheres – the earth as a small ball at the center surrounded by a wide sphere of water

85 Calcidius, *On Plato's "Timaeus"*, 563.

86 For the iconography of the abyss and its roots in a classical tradition tied to the depiction of Oceanus see Castiñeiras, “From Chaos to Cosmos,” 35f.

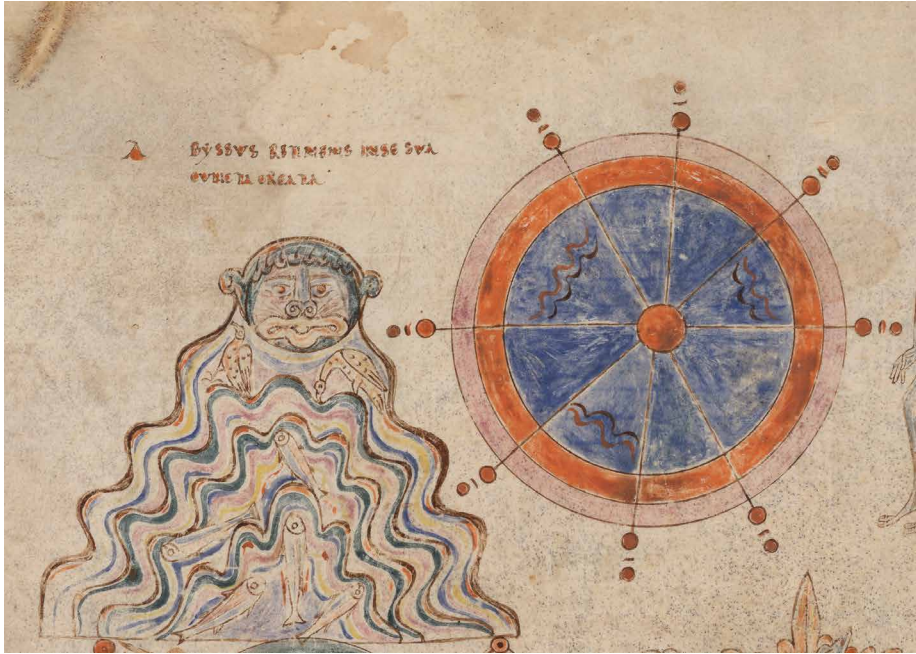


Fig. 2.22b Abyss and four elements, detail of fig. 2.21. *Ripoll Bible*, Ms. lat. 5729, fol. 5v, Monastery of S. Maria in Ripoll (Spain), 1015–1020, ink and pigment on parchment, 55 × 37 cm, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

and two outer spheres, fire and air. Next to this cosmos that is now in order are two human personifications of night and day, now separated. The lower two registers tell the story of Genesis according to the second account, beginning with the creation of Adam and Eve, the Fall, punishment, and expulsion from Paradise. What we find in the Ripoll Bible is thus a clear sequence of events from a cosmos in disorder to order that skips from the first day directly to the sixth with the creation of man.

The decisive difference in the Roda Bible's illustrations (fig. 2.22a) is that the cosmos is now clearly divided into four different elements – depicted *between* night (*nox*) on the left with *luna* and *terra*, and day (*dies*) standing on *aer* on the right with *sol*. In the lower left corner we find the watery abyss (sea) alive with animals. Fire is now a zigzagging little hill with stronger reddish tones. In this Bible, the alignment of elements and properties places even more emphasis on the inherent creative forces embedded by the Divine Creator into matter. The abyss is not simply the first stage, in which all elements are in disorder. Here it has also become aligned with water as one of four different representations of the four elements from which, according to Platonic ideas, the cosmos was created. This shift eliminates the temporal sequence present in the Ripoll Bible (fig. 2.21), where *abyssus* is placed in the upper-left corner and its titulus is the only text on the page.



Fig. 2.23 Creation of the cosmos from the four elements. Ms. lat. 117, fol. 1r, Vendôme, abbaye de la Trinité (?) (Central France), first half of twelfth century, ink and pigments on parchment, 27.3 × 17.3 cm, Vendôme, Bibliothèque municipale.

The impact of Aristotelian thought upon manuscript illuminations of the creation becomes evident if one compares the representation of the four elements in the Spanish bibles of the eleventh century and the depictions of them in manuscripts of encyclopedic tracts or commentaries on Genesis influenced by Aristotelian thought from the twelfth century. For example, a strong emphasis on God's ordering power is embedded in a unique illumination of the cosmic creation from the four elements in the frontispiece to a French Genesis commentary dating to the twelfth century now in Vendôme (fig. 2.23). The commentary's author has not been identified and the text has not been edited. The diversity of creative powers in each element and color has a particular, intriguing pictorial composition.

Three angels, the Holy Spirit, and the Divine Creator enact the eruptive pictorial big bang, a true creation *ex nihilo* aligning and combining the four elements, symbolized by the colors blue, red, green, and (faded) yellow. With his hand, the Creator seems to reach into the circle at the center from which the different streams are pouring, as if setting the planets in motion. Earth (at the bottom of the page) is fertile, putting forth buds and leaves. A green stream of water is pouring out of the cosmos while fish swim against the current, back to the center of the page. The inner sphere contains four heads of blue water creatures with strange mouths shaped like the soft lips of a fish or the sharp beak of a bird. The touch of God's finger seems to insert a series of reddish stars within a stream of different colored wavy lines expanding to the right.

This extraordinary depiction does not seem to have had any reception in its time, yet its originality makes it stand out as a twelfth-century artwork: produced at a decisive moment when Aristotelian ideas about prime matter and the prime mover were changing the way theologians thought about the creation (and thus the fabric of the created world). In this manner, the Vendôme illumination marks an insertion of new ideas into older efforts to combine a Chalcidius transmitted Platonism with the Genesis narrative.

The new ideas introduced in the twelfth century broadly necessitated new ways of depicting creation. Accordingly, we find a different, again innovative way of presenting the Creator in a manuscript produced in Paris around 1260 and preserved in Geneva (fig. 2.24). God now sits on a throne with a book, his right hand raised to bless his creative work, while below him two angels interact with the cosmos, their hands protruding into the second and third sphere. Fauna and flora already inhabit the world. On the right-hand side of the initial we find humans engaged with creation: three people are constructing a building or city using tools, including a tray to carry bricks. Although the scene is divided into two distinct parts, the different realms and actions are not clearly demarcated., which means the illustration jumps from left to right into a different scale and place – from the divine to the human sphere, from the macrocosm to the microcosm. The artist thus



Fig. 2.24 Divine creation and human craftsmanship, historiated initial to *Physica, veteris translationis*, Ms. lat. 76, fol. 88v, Paris (France), ca. 1260, ink and pigments on parchment, 30.8 × 21 cm, Geneva, Bibliothèque de Genève. (The Manuscript was produced in a Parisian workshop around the end of the 13th century. It contains the Latin version of thirteen critiques written by, or generally thought to have been written by Aristotle.)

illustrates the idea of three works propounded by Hugh of St. Victor in his treatise *De arca Noe morali* (“On the Moral Interpretation of the Ark of Noah”): the work of God, that of the angels, and that of human beings.⁸⁷

The manuscript contains a collection of Aristotle’s most important writings, and its glosses and comments indicate that it eventually belonged to at least two physicians, including one Michel Giustella, who obtained a bachelor’s degree in medicine in 1409. The small initial Q (of *quoniam*) emphasizes the beginning of a new treatise: an old version of Aristotle’s *Physics*, one of the crucial texts in the

⁸⁷ *De arca Noe*, 4:9, 115. For this source see Rudolph, *The Mystic Ark*.

Paris debates reaching their apogee a decade later.⁸⁸ Henry of Ghent was one of many scholars commentating on this work.⁸⁹ In its ninth and concluding chapter Aristotle defines the concept of *hyle*:

For admitting with them that there is something divine, good, and desirable, we hold that there are two other principles, the one contrary to it, the other such as of its own nature to desire and yearn for it. But the consequence of their view is that the contrary desires its own extinction. Yet the form cannot desire itself, for it is not defective; nor can the contrary desire it, for contraries are mutually destructive. The truth is that what desires the form is matter [hyle], as the female desires the male and the ugly the beautiful – only the ugly or the female not *per se* but *per accidens*.

The matter [hyle] comes to be and ceases to be in one sense, while in another it does not. As that which contains the privation, it ceases to be in its own nature, for what ceases to be – the privation – is contained within it. But as potentiality it does not cease to be in its own nature, but is necessarily outside the sphere of becoming and ceasing to be. For if it came to be, something must have existed as a primary substratum from which it should come and which should persist in it; but this is its own special nature, so that it will be before coming to be. (For my definition of matter [hyle] is just this – the primary substratum of each thing, from which it comes to be without qualification, and which persists in the result.) And if it ceases to be it will pass into that at the last, so it will have ceased to be before ceasing to be.⁹⁰

The miniatures from the two Spanish bibles and illuminations to Aristotelian tracts and commentaries on them show how ancient knowledge was used to “re-image” creation even within Genesis cycles (fig. 2.22a, 2.22b). The subtle shift away from a chronology of creation and toward a diagrammatic approach that we find in the Roda Bible prompts us to remember that this ancient knowledge was not used simply to flesh out the details of creation, but moreover to understand the most basic fabric of the macrocosm and the microcosm.

The integration of the cosmos diagram – or, to put it differently, a kind of “diagrammatic mode” – into a creation miniature was to be mirrored by illuminations

88 See Aristotle, *Aristoteles Latinus, codices descripsit*, 1:817, n. 1159; and Di Liscia et al., *Method and Order*, 62. Manuscripts with the same incipit are now preserved in Salamanca (Ms. 2256): see Franca and Castrillo González, *Catálogo de manuscritos*, 605; and Ker and Watson, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 2:580 [3] and Milan (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, E 71 superior [3]).

89 Salamanca, Ms. 2535, fols. 3v–178v.

90 λέγω γέγ' ὕέγω τέ πρπγω ὑποκειμενον ἐκέιμε, ἐ ο γίγνεται τι ἐιγπάρχοντος μρ κατο συμβεβηκός. Aristotle, *Physics*, 1.9 (trans. Hardie and Gaye).



Fig. 2.25 Wisdom and God, God, Sol, Luna, the microcosm, and the four elements (creation of the macrocosm days 1–4) (upper register); the creation of animals and birds (day 5) (middle register); creation of Adam and Eve (day 6), the Fall of Man, expulsion from Paradise (lower register), frontispiece. Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum*, Cgm 8345, fol. 1v, Southern Germany, ca. 1280, parchment, 22–22.6 × 16–17 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

in encyclopedic texts that did the opposite. One such example from 1270 places a human in its center, surrounded by the four elements (fig. 2.25). In the upper-right corner the sun and moon are shown as black-and-white figures holding veils blowing high into the air above them. Red stars surround the figure's head and a red crescent moon covers his heart; four medallions (two on either side of him) show the four elements, but here represented not as different materials but as four human figures, each with different attributes.⁹¹ The upper-left medallion shows a man with a club riding on a bird, representing air; the upper right an old man on a dragon, representing fire (presumably because of the creature's ability to spit flames); in the lower left a man in a rowboat denotes water; and in the lower right earth is represented by a colossal crowned figure carrying a creature tucked under each arm.

On the left of this creation scene, Wisdom, wearing a crown, is interacting with the Creator. She looks past him to the right half of the image, where the Creator is shown a second time, slightly bent towards the man he is creating. By depicting the Creator twice the illumination seems to reach back even further before the first day of creation, or, better, to the first stage of the creative process: to the conception of the idea in debate with Wisdom, only then followed by endowing it with a shape, a process already discussed at the beginning of this book.

Unfortunately, nearly every detail in the upper panel has been misinterpreted – for instance, the female figure next to the Creator was identified as Mary, and the representations are wrongly identified.⁹² This is because the single folio is slightly older than the manuscript into which it was bound – a manuscript that contains the chronicle by Rudolf of Ems written by four different scribes. Roland and Hernad suggest a very early date for the illumination, based on stylistic analogies to a manuscript dated to the 1270s and the fact that it must have already been created as a frontispiece before its reuse in the same function.⁹³ Hernad also suggests that French manuscripts might have served as models, but without giving any concrete examples. A close look at the illustrated French manuscripts of the *Liber de natura rerum* by the Dominican friar Thomas of Cantimpré (the work this page in fact illuminates)

91 Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, does not include this illumination because it was rebound as part of a manuscript written in Middle High German.

92 For the former misidentification see Hernad, *Die gotischen Handschriften*, 161–164; and Roland, *Illustrierte Weltchroniken*, 132–144 (here 137) for this and for the latter misidentification.

93 Roland, *Illustrierte Weltchroniken*, 137, suggests 1270, while Hernad, *Die gotischen Handschriften*, 163f., argues for the end of the thirteenth century because of the illuminator's familiarity with *Zackenstil* (from the mid thirteenth century). The dialectal similarities between this manuscript and the 1287 Schwabenspiegel manuscript in Freiburg indicate that the rest of the manuscript was made there at the end of the thirteenth century. Alfred Stange has compared the scribe's depiction with that in the Wilhelm of Orléans manuscript, Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Cgm. 63.

and related bestiaries suggests that, while study of such manuscripts (perhaps at a university) may have provided inspiration for the illuminator in the sense of following a pictorial tradition, they are not models in the strict sense.⁹⁴ The closest pictorial analogies to this example can be found in illuminations for a manuscript containing Old French translations of Cantimpré's texts, *Liber de monstruosis hominibus orientis*,⁹⁵ and an Old French translation of Pierre de Beauvais's bestiary.⁹⁶

Although the specific text this striking frontispiece illustrates has not yet been identified, I would like to suggest it was a frontispiece for the *Liber de natura rerum*, which was perhaps the most widely disseminated thirteenth-century encyclopedic text, begun by Cantimpré in 1228 as an introduction to natural philosophy for university teachers and other clerics. The translation into Middle High German was made in the fourteenth century by Conrad Megenberg, and includes significant textual alterations at the beginning. Among others, for example, the sun and moon (shown here above the man enclosed in the medallion) are not mentioned in Megenberg's translation; neither are the quadrupeds (particularly prominent in the middle panel of the illumination) and the sea monster.

The frontispiece's human figure is shown not lying on the ground but on his feet, wearing a loincloth (fig. 2.25). This resembles what can be seen in the Anagni frescoes in Italy, where the cupola is filled with a depiction of the microcosm, including a man at the center, while below another fresco shows Galen and Hippocrates next to a diagram of the elements, including numbers and geometric qualities (fig. 2.26). The man in the cupola is thus juxtaposed with the four elements and their qualities, together with the four humors, the ages, and the seasons, which are neither spelled out nor represented figuratively.⁹⁷

The constellation formed by that figure – the seven red stars around his head (with white lines connecting the stars to his face) and a red crescent moon at the center of his chest – emphasizes the strong relationship between microcosmic body and macrocosmic stars, as described within humoral pathology: a system that, as we know, grounded the body's tempers and conditions in an equilibrium of corporeal

94 For example, Valenciennes, Ms. 320: Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum*, France (Abbaye de Saint-Amand), 1270.

95 Paris, BnF, Ms. fr.15106. Hilka, *Eine altfranzösische moralisierende Bearbeitung*.

96 The translation was sold by Sotheby's on November 25, 1969, and again on December 4, 2007. See van den Abeele, "Deux manuscrits inconnus du Bestiaire," 187 (referring to this manuscript as known only from the 1969 sale but as having disappeared afterwards) and 189–190. The manuscript probably stems from a workshop at Mons or possibly Cambrai. The catalogue entry for the auction (Lot 53) indicates that the workshop operated "partly under the patronage of Gauthier d'Enghein and his well-read third wife, Marie de Rethel (d. 1315). The workshop specialised in secular texts, romances of chivalry, wonders of the orient (BnF, Ms. fr.15106), another Bestiary (BnF, ms. fr.14970), Richard de Fournival's *Bestiaire d'Amour* (BnF, Ms. fr. 412), and similar texts. The group even includes another French language Bestiary, Douai, ms. 711, from Anchin Abbey." See *Sotheby's Western and Oriental Manuscripts*.

97 See Bagnoli, *Medieval Frescoes*; Hauknes, "Painting against Time"; and Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, 144.



Fig. 2.26 Micro-Macrocosm, diagram outlining the relationships between the human body, the humors, the four elements, the seasons, and the ages, before 1255 (date of consecration), fresco on vaulted ceiling of crypt. Approx. 2.6 × 2.6 m, Anagni cathedral (Italy).

liquids affected by the course of the planets, sun, and moon.⁹⁸ The personifications of the sun and the moon – resembling those in Herrad of Landsberg’s *Hortus deliciarum* – can also be clearly read as the creation of day and night.⁹⁹

But is the figure shown between the four medallions Adam, or is it a more general representation of the creation of humankind? To answer this question we need to look at the lower panel, depicting Adam and Eve created *ex limo* (from clay or loam), which, as discussed earlier, is not the most conventional choice since it conflates Genesis’s two accounts. Here Adam and Eve are shown asleep at the

98 Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum*, lib. 1, 1: “Hinc alkimie septena metalla notantur, aeris humoris que septem regna vocantur; inde planetarum cursus si scripta requiris, quid tonitrus, fax, stella cadens, quid ventus et yris. Quatuor hinc elementa vide. Post fine patescit, cur venit eclipsis, scandit sol, luna recrescit. ... Unde Grece homo microcosmus quasi minor mundus dicitur.” Important scholars in Salerno rediscovered humoral pathology and then expanded on Greek and Roman ideas; the most prominent of these were Alphanus of Salerno and Constantine the African. See Kristeller, “Beitrag der Schule von Salerno”; Jacquart and Bagliani, *La scuola medica salernitana*. Scholars associated with the school at Chartres and elsewhere in Northern Europe then picked up on the ideas and integrated them into their own thinking. See Liebeschütz, *Kosmologische Motive*, 121–127.

99 See Zahlten, *Creatio mundi*, fig. 342.

moment when God, having shaped their bodies, blows a soul into each – an image that would appear to contain a reference to the second book of Cantimpré’s text, incorporating Augustine’s elaborations on the soul. According to Augustine, in the divine act of blowing life into the “breathing hole” of the face (*inspiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vite*), the senses are animated and, guided by the mind (*intellectum*), humans are able to contemplate the works of Wisdom.¹⁰⁰

The key to understanding this full-page miniature lies in the depiction of the four elements. In contrast with all other known depictions, here, as mentioned, the illuminator has chosen not to depict materials or parts of the cosmos, but rather four human figures. The man holding a club and riding a bird to represent air is young; the man opposite him, seated on a dragon to represent fire, is old. This opposition between young and old illustrates the reference to Aristotle found in Cantimpré’s text: human beings, who walk on their hands in infancy and then on their feet when grown, return to earth when they have grown old.¹⁰¹ In this way, the illumination depicts not only the four elements but also humankind’s four ages: the lower-right medallion, showing earth, evokes the tops of nature, *Natura*, nourishing her children at her bosom.¹⁰²

Likewise, in a third facet of the theme, suggested by Zahltén, the animals created on days two and five perhaps represent the four elements’ effects. If this is the case, then we see the first four days of creation – the creation of the macrocosm – in the upper panel; the creation of the fifth day, filling the earth with all kinds of birds and animals, in the middle panel; and the creation of human beings on the sixth day in the left part of the lower panel, followed by the Fall and the expulsion from Paradise on the right.

Another manuscript of Cantimpré’s treatise, also located in Munich, uses a far more diagrammatic model to represent the work’s main ideas (fig. 2.27). Here again we encounter a standing man with the sun, the moon, and the planets, along with the four personifications of the elements – this time riding (clockwise from top left) a bird, a lion, a fish, and a centaur. The four seasons are represented in four medallions between the upper two and the lower two elements. The main difference, however, is that no effort has been made here to combine this schematic representation with the accounts of Genesis, to combine acts of creation and cosmological theories in the impressive way as did the illuminator of the first frontispiece.

What is new and unique awaits us upon turning the page. Following this highly original representation of Genesis, with its combination of Wisdom as a contributor

100 See Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum*, lib. 2, cap. 10, 27, 90: “De Anima et eius virtutibus naturalibus secundum beatum Augustinum.”

101 Ibid., lib. 1, 1: “Quapropter, ut dicit Aristotiles[!], homo ab infantia primo ambulat super manus, postea adolescens erectus in pedes ambulat, postremo in etate decrepita iterum invurvatur ad terram, testis utique sibi, qui de terra ssumptus est et in terram vadit.”

102 Modersohn, *Natura als Göttin im Mittelalter*; Modersohn, “Natura Artifex.”

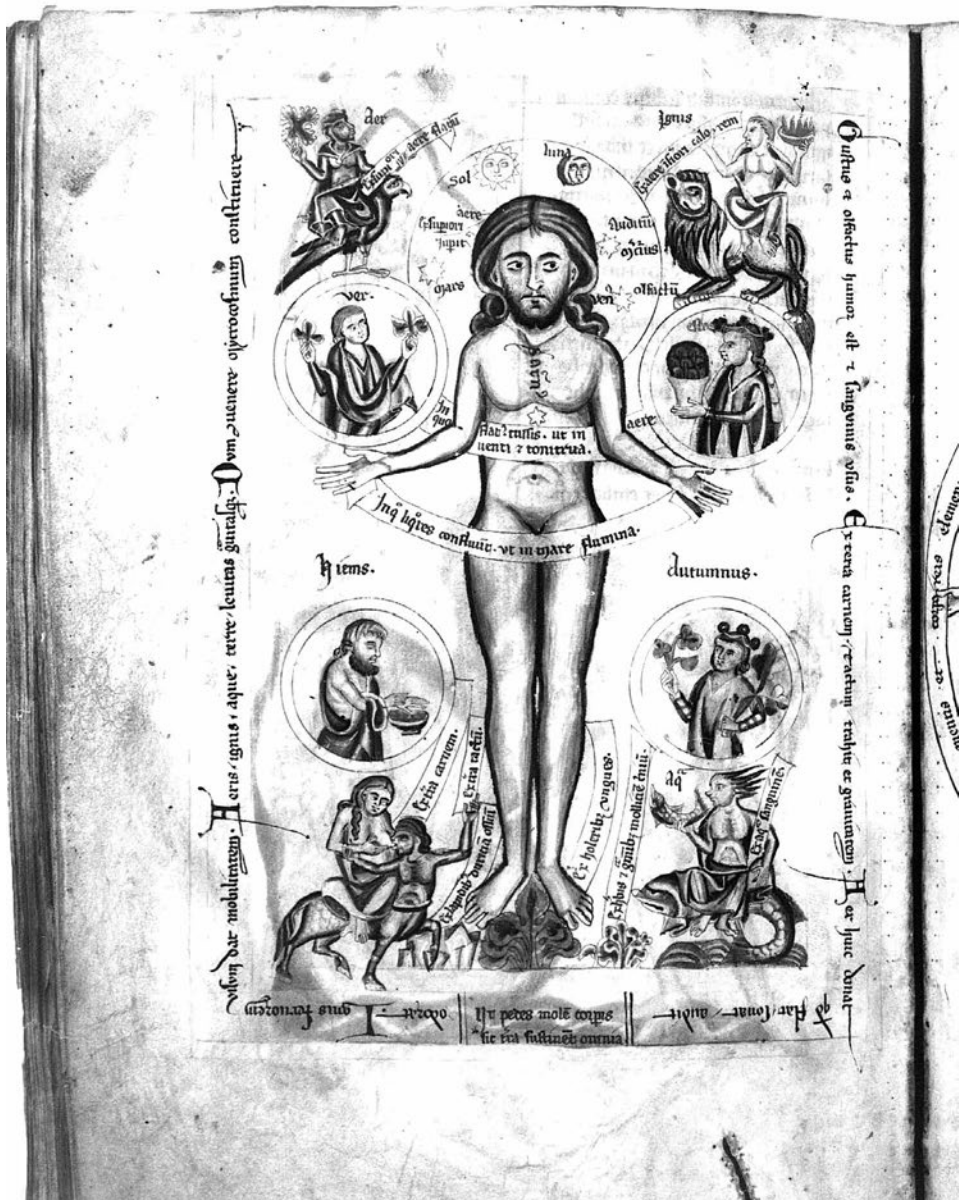


Fig. 2.27 Standing man with the sun, the moon, and the planets, along with the four personifications of the elements riding (clockwise from top left) a bird, a lion, a fish, and a centaur. The four seasons are represented in four medallions between the upper two and the lower two elements. Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de naturis rerum visibilibium*, Clm 2655, fol. 104v, Germany, 13th century, 33.5 × 23.5 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.



Fig. 2.28 Author portrait, verso of fig. 2.25. Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum visibilibus*, Cgm 8345, fol. 1r, Southern Germany, ca. 1280, parchment, 22–22.6 × 16–17 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

to creation, the four elements, and the creation of the macrocosm, of animals, and “man the microcosm called a small world” (*homo microscosmos quasi minor mundus dicitur*), that is, Adam and Eve made from loam (fig. 2.25), we encounter an author portrait – Thomas Cantimpré in dialogue with Aristotle or another authority quoted by him. The illumination on the frontispiece unmistakably cites the authorities referred to by Cantimpré in his text: Greek ideas about the relationship between the microcosm, the macrocosm, and humoral pathology; Aristotle and the different ages of man; and the creation and then animation of the body (following ideas from Aristotle and Augustine). I would therefore like to suggest that the person shown writing on the recto of this leaf (fig. 2.28) is Cantimpré himself, inspired by one of the ancient authorities mentioned in the prologue. This would also explain why he is depicted with a scroll since bound parchment volumes did not exist at the time, in which these authorities were writing.

If the illustrations we have been considering show what was before the creation, then what exactly do they show? And where is God in this constellation? Is he standing beside the earth, or is he positioned beyond the earth and even the spheres surrounding the macrocosm? Did the various artists, whose frontispieces we have discussed here, follow the idea that through the word everything came into being, was created out of nothing and not out of previously unformed matter, given shape during the creation? One exemplary case can show how artists responded to this question, consciously and with innovative solutions aimed at relating their own work to divine acts of creation.

Making Manuscripts and the Tools of the Artifex

The more artists began to root their creative work in analogy with the divine acts of creation, the more they began to experiment with images of the creation showing a *deus artifex*. The aforementioned frontispiece of the Vienna *Bible moralisée* (Cod. 2554, fig. 2.11) makes this especially clear. The idea of the highly inventive, indeed quasi-divine, artist promulgated in this illumination would take on nearly iconic status, not least through this particular image's wide distribution – a process rare for a medieval book illumination.

Keeping in mind this context of reception, we can return to the image's compass and consider it in more detail. The instrument placed in God's hand by the Parisian illuminator working in the 1220s not only indicates the legacy of the debates about Aristotelian ideas for artists and their creations, but also points to the compass's own considerable ancestry. This tool gives the divine architect a place and a dimension relative to his creation. He is shown with his ball of raw material, standing beyond the macrocosm, placing an arm of the compass in the center of the world to be created.

The tradition of representing God with a drawing tool or pair of compasses stretches back to the beginning of the eleventh century, when illuminators decided to begin their pictorial accounts with the creation of the cosmos rather than of humankind, as had been the case until then.¹⁰³ Clearly, depicting God with such an instrument emphasized his role as *artifex*.¹⁰⁴ As Alain de Lille explained, architects and craftsmen did not use compasses primarily for drawing, but for measuring and ordering.¹⁰⁵ How literal the motif was meant to be taken seems unclear. The act of drawing a circle seems to have been perfectly suited to analogies between artistic and divine practice. Cosmological diagrams often required the use of compasses, and the artists' act of representing and ordering the cosmos thus potently mirrored God's macrocosmic act of doing the same. This means that the analogy worked both ways: the illuminator's activity serving as a model for understanding and imagining God's creative acts, just as it was the godlike nature of human beings that made the illuminators' work possible at all. Moreover, it is through their craft that they can become even more similar to God. They not only possess wisdom and ideas, but also art, referred to in relevant medieval texts as *artificium* in reference to Plato's *techné*.

If we compare this renowned frontispiece with those of its three Latin sister manuscripts – the Vienna (fig. 2.12), the Oxford-Paris-London (fig. 2.13), and the Toledo-New York (fig. 2.14)¹⁰⁶ – there is a particularly pronounced difference between a God physically involved in the act of creation and an enthroned God whose physical involvement is reduced to drawing the boundary between the created world and his own realm.¹⁰⁷ Earlier miniatures from the eleventh century show the Creator with a pair of compasses and scales, taking inspiration from Ecclesiasticus (the book of Sirach) 28:29: “Melt down thy gold and silver, and make a balance for thy words, and a just bridle for thy mouth.”¹⁰⁸ John Friedman has suggested calling this type of miniature, with its reference to measuring and weighing, the “Wisdom type,” inspired by the verse in the book of Wisdom (11:21).¹⁰⁹ However, images with this iconography are quite rare, and most depictions of these instruments appear considerably later.¹¹⁰ This indicates that, just when compasses no longer appear just as an attribute, but are actually used by God in the creation process, the illuminator

103 Worm, “Das illuminierte Wort.”

104 Hellemans, *La Bible Moralisée*, 130–133 and 147–154.

105 Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 527–529; Alanus, *De planctu*, VIII. 28, 106.

106 What were originally single- or multi-volume *Bibles moralisées* are now dispersed across thirteen manuscripts. See note 41 above and Lowden, *Making of the Bibles Moralisées*.

107 Hellemans, *La Bible Moralisée*, 127, who argues that “Lacte de créer par Dieu sur ce frontispiece s'avère une trompe l'œil, puisqu'elle symbolize à la fois la Création de l'univers et la création du *totus mundus* dans l'object-codex.”

108 In the Vulgate: “aurum tuum et argentum confla et verbis tuis facito stateram et frenos ori tuo rectos.”

109 Friedman, “The Architect's Compass,” 423.

110 *Ibid.*

is pointing to a deeper meaning. A closer look at the Toledo *Bible moralisée* helps clarify what that meaning might be.

God is holding the compass in his right hand and has either just completed or is still drawing the outer contour of the cosmos. If he is still drawing, then the instrument is about to reach his left hand, which is holding his creation. Strikingly, he is not alone – there are four angels holding the quatrefoil in which his throne appears, while another four assist in the creative work at the scene's core. These innermost angels are of special interest: above the broiling mass at the heart of the inner circle they are adjusting the exact position of the compass point with their hands and the tips of their wings. Each of them is carefully contributing to the precision of God's creative enterprise, guiding the pivot that joins the legs of the compass and adjusting the inner leg, its needle stuck in the center of the circle, right in the mass that is yet to be formed – a homogenous disk. In the Toledo manuscript, the compass's divine movement visibly generates time, space, angels, differentiated matter, and so forth. In that light, we can at least surmise that one basic question raised by this manuscript's image is whether mortal artists were meant to imagine their compass use as a similar activity to God's: whether human geometry was different from its divine counterpart in essence and not just degree.

Turning now to the Oxford-Paris-London manuscript, (fig. 2.19), we see that the artist here is less attentive to an angelic contribution to creation. The compass arm is already precisely inserted, and the angels are simply accompanying the process. The representation of the four elements and the reference to a rainbow in the order of colors in the frame of the quatrefoil are foregrounded in comparison to the illumination for the Toledo Bible. In contrast with these other images of divine *artifex* with compasses, the seated Creator we see in an unfinished manuscript now kept in the British Library (fig. 2.29) seems to depict a less active God. Nevertheless, the picture's details offer many indications of what he has created: despite God's rigid posture and a gaze directed away from the ongoing work in his lap, he is actively involved and invested in his world-producing project. The inscription right next to the illumination, referring to the image opposite, picks up the aforementioned idea that the creation of light also heralds the moment the angels were created: "*Creatio lucis: angelorum creatione significant* – the creation of light means the creation of the angels."

These illuminations emphasize the artists' efforts to depict a tool they themselves use. They mark the first time compasses are depicted with wing or bow dividers joined by a ball-shaped hinge and connected with a wing that tightens the adjustable leg. Earlier examples, such as the frontispiece with the Divine Creator in the Tiberius Cotton Genesis, show compasses with one leg roughly twice the length of the other, joined at the midpoint of the longer leg (fig. 2.30). In the Viennese *Bible moralisée* (fig. 2.17), the artist even shows us that the legs and wing are made of different



2.29 God creating the cosmos, frontispiece. *Bible moralisée*, Add. Ms. 18719, fol. 1r, London (England), last quarter of 13th century, ink and pigments on parchment, 41 × 29.5 cm, London, British Library.

materials (perhaps gold for the legs and brass for the wing); and the opening in the sharp anchoring leg for the adjustable wing is also illuminated very clearly. Special attention is paid to the tips of the legs, the hinge at the top, and the small reddish knob firmly connecting the end of the wing to the drawing leg. The (round) shapes shown in the frontispieces – the composition and representation of a quatrefoil with a double frame inscribed in a rectangle, the circular cosmos held by the Creator, his halo (drawn with minor slippage) – clearly required knowledge of compasses, and quite likely experience using them, a knowledge accompanying familiarity with current debates on creation and the most influential commentaries on Genesis.

Let us return now to the Hamburg Bible (see fig. 2.3) as Erik Petersen has shed light on the extent to which this manuscript's painters reference its making.¹¹¹ In some two dozen of the historiated initials, we see the apostles writing, and within these illustrations is depicted almost every step involved in a manuscript's production. For example, we encounter Saint Jerome proofreading a sheet on his

¹¹¹ Petersen, "The Bible as Subject and Object of Illustration"; Petersen, "Illuminatio." See also Bjarnbo, "Ein Beitrag zum Werdegang der mittelalterlichen Pergamenthandschriften."



Fig. 2.30 Divine creator. Beginning of prefatory pictorial cycle with scenes from the Old and New Testaments, "Tiberius Psalter," computistic tables, prayers, confession, a homily in Old English, and collects. *Tiberius Cotton V Genesis C VI*, fol. 7v, Old Minster, Winchester (?) (England), third quarter of the 11th to second half of the 12th century, ink and pigment on parchment, 24.5 × 15 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 2.31 St. Jerome reading (proof-reading?) a written sheet on his desk, C-Initial. *Hamburg Bible*, MS GKS 4 2°, Biblia Latina, vol. II, fol. 38v, Hamburg (Germany), ca. 1255, ink and pigments on parchment, 55.7 × 39 cm, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek.



Fig. 2.32 St. Jerome and a parchment maker, D-Initial. *Hamburg Bible*, MS GKS 4 2°, Biblia Latina, vol. II, fol. 183r, Hamburg (Germany), ca. 1255, ink and pigments on parchment, 55.7 × 39 cm, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek.



Fig. 2.33 St. Jerome cutting a piece of parchment into a sheet. *Hamburg Bible*, MS GKS 4 2°, Biblia Latina, vol. II, N-Initial, fol. 195r, Hamburg (Germany), ca. 1255, ink and pigments on parchment, 55.7 × 39 cm, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek.



Fig. 2.34 St. Paul writing, with pen, knife, and horns for ink in the desk. *Hamburg Bible*, MS GKS 4 2°, Biblia Latina, vol. III, fol. 133v, Hamburg (Germany), ca. 1255, ink and pigments on parchment, 55.7 × 39 cm, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek.



Fig. 2.35 Timothy preparing a sheet of parchment. *Hamburg Bible*, MS GKS 4 2°, Biblia Latina, vol. III, fol. 142v, Hamburg (Germany), ca. 1255, ink and pigments on parchment, 55.7 × 39 cm, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek.



Fig. 2. 36 St. Paul preparing to write, with lined sheet, ink, pen, and knife. *Hamburg Bible*, MS GKS 4 2°, Biblia Latina, vol. III, fol. 165r, Hamburg (Germany), ca. 1255, ink and pigments on parchment, 55.7 × 39 cm, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek.

desk (fig. 2.31); a discussion between Jerome and a parchment maker (fig. 2.32), the latter cutting a piece of parchment into a sheet (fig. 2.33); and Saint Paul's writing equipment on his desk, including horns for ink, pen, and knife (fig. 2.34). Timothy is depicted preparing a sheet of parchment (fig. 2.35), and Paul sits with a lined sheet, ink, pen, and knife ready to write (fig. 2.36). Such intense emphasis on manuscript production in a manuscript's illuminations is highly unusual. At the very end, in the last of the eighty-nine illuminated initials (eighty-one of which are figural), we are presented with the illuminator himself, his self-portrait, recalling images of St. John. A long ornamental band connects him with the initial *A* that marks the beginning of the Apocalypse, and thus with the vision the saint is witnessing (fig. 2.37). This is perhaps the most personal of all the manuscript maker's self-referential games.

There is no direct precedent for this combination of self-portraiture, pictorial reflection about manuscript making, and the *mise-en-scène* of pigment. In a binio (part of a bifolium) containing an index attributed to the scribe Burchardulus, we also find a portrait of an illuminator, surrounded by medallions showing monks in the various stages of creating a manuscript. Originally made for the Michelsberg monastery in the middle of the twelfth century, it was later bound into a manuscript in Bamberg (fig. 2.38).¹¹² Ten medallions show the monks with their tools. Beginning

¹¹² Dengler-Schreiber, *Scriptorium*; Suckale-Redlefsen, *Handschriften*, 31.

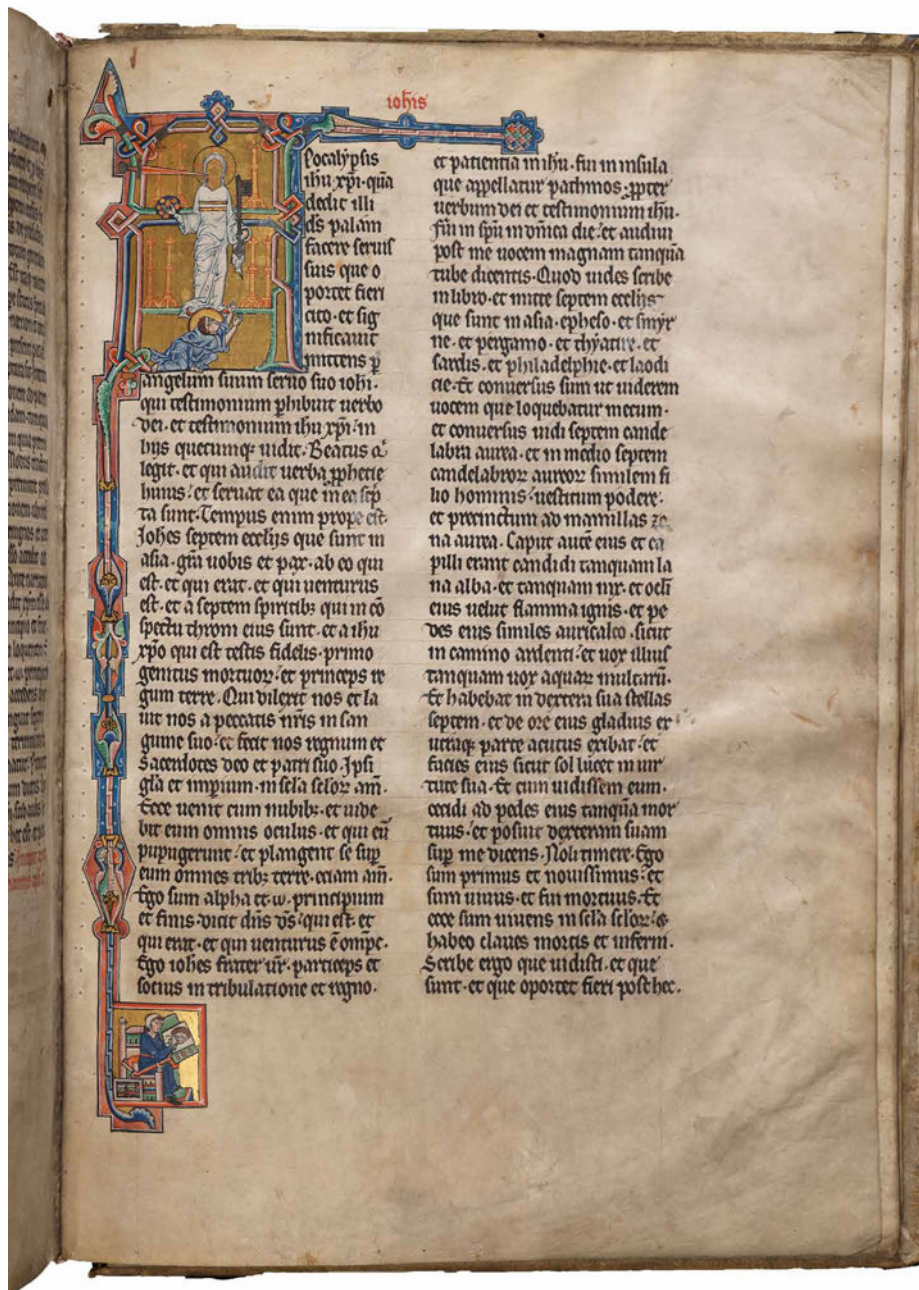


Fig. 2.37 The painter. *Hamburg Bible*, MS GKS 4 2, Biblia Latina, Appendage to the initial A, vol. III, fol. 208r, Hamburg (Germany), ca. 1255, ink and pigments on parchment, 55.7 × 39 cm, Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek.



Fig. 2.38 So-called Schreiberbild with different stages of producing a manuscript. Msc. Patr. 5, fol. 1v, made for the Michelsberg monastery (Germany), mid 12th century, brown and red ink on parchment, 28.5 x 20.5 cm, Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek Bamberg.

on the upper left and moving down, we see a monk sharpening his feather with a knife, along with a wax tablet for writing the draft, preparing the skin, and an axe for producing the cover of the book. On the right we see a monk correcting or defining the rubrics, working with the binding, preparing the folios with ruler and knife, and holding up a hammer (perhaps for producing the clasps). At the top center, the book is held open and being presented; and at the bottom center

a monk is being instructed with it.¹¹³ The illuminator has embedded himself in the center of the scene, where, in an architectural structure probably indicating a three-aisled church, four monks are praying to an angel. Holding a vessel on the right, the illuminator draws a line demarcating the roof's edge.

Comparing this depiction with the Hamburg Bible, it is evident that both illuminators are engaged with their role of depicting what others see in visions. Furthermore, we see that the Hamburg Bible is even more innovative, especially with regard to its depiction of divine creation at the beginning and the incorporation of the illuminator's self-portrait as a visionary at the end, connected to the depiction of God through an ornamental band.

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¹¹³ Suckale-Redlefsen, *Handschriften*, 31–33.

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3. Creation and Composition

Abstract: A proposed new reconstruction of the original Holkham Bible begins with an unusual picture of the Divine Creator. The frontispiece rewards the beholder with a combination of artistic techniques: color washes, ink and lead-point drawing, and the use of feather strokes set in wet or dry color washes. Remarkable details (Wheel of Fortune, *arbor scientiae*, a composite creature resembling an ape, and a self-portrait of the artist enumerating the ensuing contents) show that the manuscript is a compelling case that emerged from a learned, even intellectual environment – a kind of visual reflection. Entering this constellation, we have the opportunity to reconstruct the impact of scholarly debates on art and artistic processes.

Keywords: Holkham Picture Bible, *natura naturans*, *arbor scientia*, tree diagrams, enumeration, Wheel of Fortune

Drawing, Painting, and the Four Elements

In the Holkham Bible (fig. 3.1), a collection of biblical stories produced in England before 1350 and written in Norman French, we find a picture of the Divine Creator that rewards the beholder with an unusual – and stunning – combination of artistic techniques: color washes, drawing in ink and lead point, and even the use of feather strokes set in wet or dry washes. Together with other unconventional features, this raises the question of how new the artist was to illuminating manuscripts.¹

Despite the illumination's reflection of a project possessing clear size and scope – preparation of a picture bible with accompanying text passages – the parchment

¹ Hassall, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, suggests that two different hands were responsible for the coloring and the drawing. Brown, *The Holkham Bible*, 7, wonders whether “the manuscript was intended as a pattern-book, an artist’s sketch-book or model, for a series of wall paintings, tapestries or embroideries.” There Brown also observes that “the way in which the manuscript was prepared and put together – its codicology – is unusual enough to suggest that it was not made by someone familiar with book production. This implies that the project resided in the hands of an artist, rather than a scribe or stationer who would usually supervise the manufacture of a book.” The lack of margins around images diminished during binding, and the evident ignorance of conventions for arranging the hair and flesh sides of the skins within the gatherings supports Brown’s argument, as does the parchment’s thickness. See also Freeman Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts*, 2:286–287, no. 221.



Fig. 3.1 Divine Creator. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 2r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, 231 images recounting episodes from Genesis, the Gospels, and the Apocalypse, with summary captions in Anglo-Norman French, London, British Library.

is unusually thick and of poor quality (fig. 3.2), and the illuminations sit very tight to the edge, as though their layout did not take into account the trimming required for binding the quires (fig. 3.3). Alternatively, the quires were not made for a bound volume. (Michael Camille has suggested that the images were composed without the text, and that the text was added later; but the fact that the same tint was used in the written text and for drawing lines such as contours as essential parts of the images precludes this possibility.)² The quires are irregular: the frontispiece is a single leaf (fig. 3.4) and another leaf in the second quire was probably cut out (fig. 3.5).³ Common features of rich illuminations of the time are missing, such as highlights painted with lead white, and the use of gold or lapis. The use of unmixed brushstrokes of color in such a manuscript illumination is especially unusual. Its potential deeper significance emerges with consideration of the frontispiece's remaining parts, together with the use of color in subsequent pages of the manuscript.

Opening the frontispiece we find a Dominican monk and the artist in his studio below an arch on which an angel stands, holding a scroll with a poetic summary of

² See Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*.

³ For the quire structure see Brown, *The Holkham Bible*, 25. The first quire has seven leaves, with the addition of the frontispiece/Fortuna. The remaining Genesis scenes fill the bifolio of quire 2.



Fig. 3.2 Self-portrait of the artist, detail of fol. 1r. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.3 Detail of binding, detail of fol. 24v. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

the manuscript's content (fig. 3.6). Over the page is a depiction of Fortuna spinning her wheel, the cyclical rise and fall of an (allegorical) king or the rise, fall and (re) ascent of a king (fig. 3.7), a scene shown opposite in an image of God the Creator with compasses (fig. 3.8). This juxtaposition presents time and creation as opposing principles: in the creation image, history has not yet unfolded. The creation could be seen as the beginning of linear time (to the Apocalypse) and Fortuna represents cyclical time (predicated itself on the cosmic cycles). The only other instance of an identical set of inscriptions spelling out the rise, reign, fall, and (we might add) downfall similar to the king's depiction in the Holkham manuscript is in a twelfth-century manuscript containing the *Carmina burana*, today kept in Munich (fig. 3.9).⁴

In the Holkham manuscript's Creator image God holds a wide-open compass, which in fact covers the exact distance chosen by the illuminator in circumscribing the perimeter of the cosmos: the perforation in the parchment sits right where

4 Wheel of Fortune, Codex Buranus München Clm. 4660. See Bischoff, *Carmina Burana*, and Walworth, "Earthly Delights."



Fig. 3.4 Detail of binding, detail of fols. 1v/2r. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.5 Detail of binding, detail of fols. 13v/14r. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

the leg of the depicted compass ends. Depicted Creator and depicting creation are here intertwined to a unique degree. God is seated on an obscured throne, and is cloaked in a wide blue mantle over a purple gown. Behind him is a sea of licking flames in various colors (from blue to red to yellow-green) filling the inner circle of the cosmos. Here we see the application of a hitherto rare effect: The artist has used watercolor, resulting in washed-out splashes of color with saturated edges, to which he then added single fine lines of color only after the washes had dried. The surrounding sphere of air is decorated with diamonds enclosing the heraldic signs of lilies, flowers, and oak leaves, all aromatic vegetation.

If one reads these two inner zones as earth and air, the blue firmament as water (with sun and moon attached), and (hell's) fire below, all four elements are embedded in the composition. The mouth of hell is depicted by licking flames in two shades of red (minium and vermillion) as well as indigo moving upward from the lower bottom. The hellish beasts' eyes seem to mirror this scene with a dark spot in the middle, surrounded by a blue and finally red sphere. Similar to this is the monkey in the frontispiece examining a ball, here with a blue middle surrounded by red. At the top of the page, heaven is occupied by twelve angels surrounding a throne on which is seated a central winged angel dressed in a purple mantle over an indigo garment. The angels are divided into two groups: Those on the right are praying with hands closed, while those on the left are engaged in lively debate. The angel at the center, probably Satan, is receiving a crown from the first of the praying angels to his left. This angelic arc above is juxtaposed with the licking flames of hell and the mouth of the abyss below.



Fig. 3.6 Dominican monk and artist in his studio, below an arch on which an angel stands, holding a scroll with a poetic summary of the manuscript's content. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 1r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.7 Wheel of Fortune. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 1v, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.8 Divine Creator with Compasses. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 2r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.10 Creation of the cosmos (day 1–4) with the four elements, historiated initial D of a scribe. Aldobrandino of Siena, *Le Régime du corps*, Sloane 2435, fol. 1r, France, third quarter of the 13th century, ca. 1285, 29.5 × 19 cm, London, British Library.

What is presented here is in a sense mirrored by the illumination facing it, the *Rota Fortunae* (Wheel of Fortune). There again we find the crown, worn by Fortuna and the king she lets rise and fall, generating a cyclical motion from upheaval to revival. The presence of the rebel angels, depicted just before their expulsion from the heavenly sphere and closely connected to the theme of mankind's four stages, marks an original inclusion of this scene in the pictorial narrative of the creation.

In both the Holkham Bible and the *Bible moralisée* shown later in fig. 3.17, by holding a compass God is pointing to the actual making of his planned work. John Lowden has underscored the role of the Parisian *Bibles moralisées* as inspiration for the depiction of the Divine Creator in this manuscript.⁵ In Paris of the 1220s, as in England a century later, pictorial representations of the act of divine creation did not depict the event according to the biblical account. Instead, they made reference to the above-mentioned Aristotelian idea of *prima materia* and the Creator as *artifex*,

⁵ Lowden, "The Holkham Bible." For the pictorial similarities at work here see Smith, "Crafting the Old Testament," 106 and fig. 5.1.

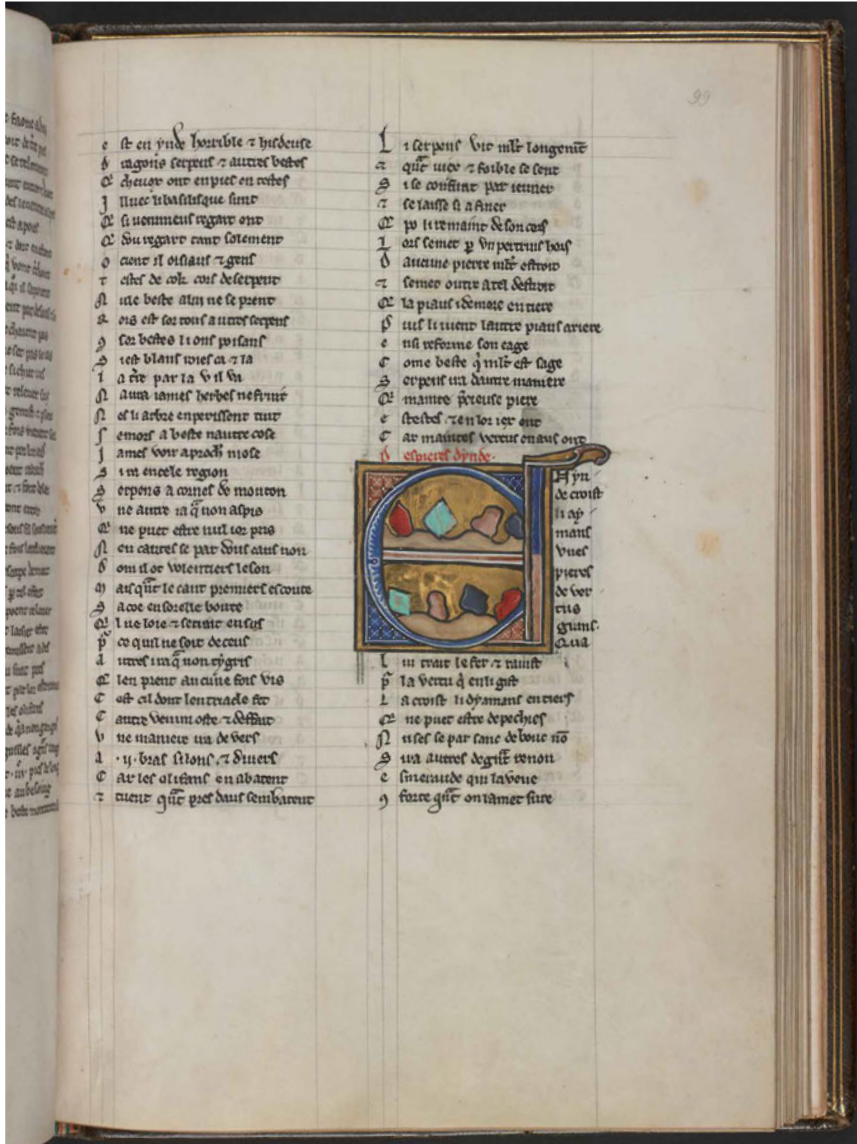


Fig. 3.11 Precious stones. Gauthier de Metz, *Image du monde*, Sloane 2435, fol. 99r, France, third quarter of the 13th century, ca. 1285, 29.5 × 19 cm, London, British Library.

with depictions of God making and shaping the four elements. We find the same focus in an illumination in an English *Bible moralisée*, begun shortly before 1300 (but not unfinished), with the elements strongly emphasized through the colors red, orange, white, and blue (see fig. 2.29).

As we have seen, various medieval encyclopedic texts describe the creation of the cosmos out of the four elements. One illuminated manuscript kept today

in the British Library (Sloane 2435) and relevant to the Holkham Bible pictures contains two such texts: Aldobrandino of Siena's *Le Régime du corps* and Gautier of Metz's *L'Image du monde* (fig. 3.10). In its first and most elaborate initial we see the creation of earth, water, air, and fire, all surrounding the T-shaped cosmos. The earth's brownish color is also used for the hat of a scribe, Aldobrandino of Siena, depicted just below the initial, apparently writing with a quill in his right hand and simultaneously erasing what he has just written with a knife or ruler in his left. Interestingly, the chapter on the four elements is missing from this manuscript; instead, the chapter on precious stones opens with a historiated initial depicting them, again in four colors – here red, blue, white, and black (fig. 3.11).

Although some treatises on stones mention the creation of the cosmos from the four elements, none of them link pigment-producing stones to the work of medieval painters and illuminators.⁶ Likewise, numerous encyclopedic texts deal with precious stones, most often the groups of twelve mentioned in various parts of the Bible. But, while they connect them to Genesis, the creation of the cosmos out of four elements, describing their creation and geographic origin, none of these encyclopedic works discuss the pigments made from these stones. They do, however, describe the four elements and their relationship to the different cosmic spheres. The most elaborate treatment of the actual spatial distribution of both elements and spheres, in the framework of the link between precious stones and the creation of the cosmos from four elements, is found in Moses Maimonides (for illustrations to such texts, see fig. 3.12, fig. 3.13, and fig. 3.14).⁷

6 Biblical and non-biblical texts referring to twelve stones include the following: Exodus 28 (Aaron's breastplate), Ezekiel (gems of Paradise), Apocalypse 21, Prudentius's *Psychomachia* 851–867, the Pseudo-Bede's *De duodecim lapidibus*, Henry of Huntingdon's *De gemmis preciosis*, Albert the Great's *Book of Minerals*, Alexander Neckams's *De naturis rerum*, Avicenna's *De congelatione*, al-Biruni's *Kitāb al-jamāhir*, Macer's *Secretum secretorum*, Hrabanus Maurus's *De gemmis*, Isidor's *Etymologiae*, and Marbod's *On Stones*. Stones also play a role in several anonymous texts dating to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, including Bern, Burgerbibliothek A0091–11, A0092–26, and A0092–27; Cod. 410, Cod. 416. For a good overview see Meier, "Zur Quellenfrage."

7 Maimonides, "The Foundation of the Torah" in *The Book of Knowledge*, 8f.: "Below the moon's sphere the Lord created a substance different from that of the celestial spheres. He created four elements of this substance that were not like the forms of the spheres, and each of these elements was part of the substance. The first element is fire, which joined with part of the substance issues as fire. The second element is air which when joined with some of the substance issues as air. The third element is water and the fourth element is earth. So under the firmament there are four elements, one above the other, encircling one another around like a sphere. The first element, which is near the moon's sphere, is fire, below it is air, below the air is the water and below the water is the earth, and there is no unfilled space between them." Maimonides continues: "The four elements – fire, air, water and earth – are the foundation of all that is created below the firmament, all humans, animals, birds, creeping things and fishes, all plants, metals, precious stones and pearls, and other stones for building, and which form mountains and thick dust; all these bodies below the firmament – except the four elements – are a union of substance and form made up of the four, while the four elements themselves are not composite."



Fig. 3.12 Precious stones. Matfré Ermengaud (Matfrés Ermengau, Eymengau) de Beziers, *Breviari d'Amor*, Harley MS 4940, fol. 44r, France, mid 14th century, 34 × 24.5 cm, London, British Library.

In the Holkham Bible, the use of barely mixed color (the seemingly pure pigment dissolved in a watery wash) foregrounds the picture's making, particularly preparation of the pigments (fig. 3.15). Precedents for this were set by some of the earlier manuscripts described earlier, such as the Hamburg Bible.⁸

⁸ The aforementioned eleventh-century Spanish manuscripts reveal an interesting parallel to the Holkham Bible in the depiction of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. In the Holkham Bible (fig. 3.15) the abyss on the right is consuming the red flames; hence the smoke from Abel's sacrifice is ascending to heaven while Cain's appears to die and trickle downward under the abyss's spell.



Fig. 3.13 Diagram of precious stones in three rows of five colored disks, surrounded by red and blue pen-work. Matfré Ermengau de Béziers's *Breviari d'Amor*, Yates Thompson 31, fol. 65r, (Spain), last quarter of the 14th century, ink and pigments on parchment, 36.5 × 25 cm, London, British Library.

With the Bible's scene of an illuminator at work in mind from the previous page, within this creation miniature the blurred shapes resulting from applying wet pigment to the wet binder give the flickering color an impression of chaos. The yet unshaped earth is depicted as a kind of creative potentiality, surrounded by a strict pattern of rhombi drawn in precise thin lines of red ink, two very different techniques in proximity and tension. Both scenes – the frontispiece with the artist's studio (fig. 3.6) and the Divine Creator forming the cosmos (fig. 3.8) – differ in two



Fig. 3.14 Cain, Abel, sacrifice. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 5r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

ideas of creativity. One is normative: it designs illuminations with compasses, following iconographic tradition, and standard practices of drawing and painting. The other is subversive, working against genres by opposing drawing and painting within the same miniature and combining various elements of animals and humans to create a composite creature.

Moving forward again in the Holkham Bible, we see the use of blurred watery brushstrokes applied to elements of nature – grass, animals, leaves (fig. 3.16 and 3.17). Their “vibrant blurriness” stands in contrast to the carefully placed brownish lines and dots of tint or lead that shape shadows indicating Adam’s breast and nipples, and the contour of his ribs. The contrast between the Divine Creator as having an idea for and rendering his likeness by shaping Adam and Eve’s bodies from earth, a creative substance, and the power of fertile nature has never been evidenced so strongly pictorially: that is, by drawing lines and applying tiny dots to outline a human body on the one hand (fig. 3.18 and fig. 3.19) and applying paint for fauna and flora on the other. Here the illuminator is using a somewhat experimental technique in the sense that its outcome is controlled not only by the artist but also by the way the colors flow and interact.

In the next pair of illuminations, animated red-cheeked figures tell the story of the Fall (fig. 3.20 and fig. 3.21): Their ability to see truly and perceive God having been blurred by the original sin of earthly desire, Adam and Eve are expelled from Paradise.



Fig. 3.15 Adam naming the animals. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 2v, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.16 Creation of Adam and Eve. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 3r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.17 God putting Adam to sleep to take a rib out, detail of fig. 3.16, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 3r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

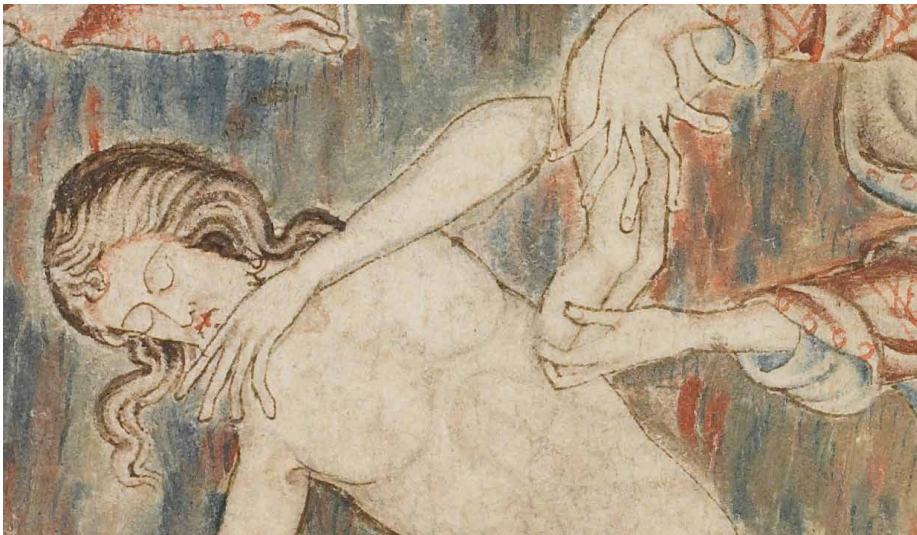


Fig. 3.18 Creation of Eve, detail of fig. 3.16, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 3r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

We can then follow the vibrant terra to the end of the manuscript, which closes with the Apocalypse. In a highly unusual illumination depicting the aftermath of the earthquake signaling the end of time we see two circles undoing – or completing – creation (fig. 3.22). Inscriptions above and below this cataclysmic event on the



Fig. 3.19 God warning Adam and Eve not to eat from the Tree of Wisdom. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 3v, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.20 Fall of Man and Expulsion from Paradise. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 4r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.21 End of Time – Earthquake: “on the eighth day the earth and all on it will tremble” and “on the ninth day the earth will be completely fused and flattened.” God’s hand pushes *terra* from the left, causing it to collide with the firmament on the right. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 41r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.22 God, Natura naturans and Wheel of Fortune. Francesco da Barberino, *Documenti d'Amore*, Cod. Barb. lat. 4076, fol. 27r., Italy, 14th century, ink and pigments on parchment, 30 x 22.2 cm, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

upper half of the page describe days six through nine of the end of days. Below this we see terra as the colorful orb as depicted in the creation miniature, surrounded by a wavy sky and overlapping a remarkable depiction of the spheres. Above both orbs the text reads “on the eighth day the earth and all on it will tremble” and “on the ninth day the earth will be completely fused and flattened.”⁹ God’s hand (his body still hidden until the Last Judgment) pushes *terra* from the left, causing it to collide with the firmament on the right. The colors in this illumination, indicators

9 Brown, *The Holkham Bible*, 58.

of chaos and the elements, fall back into their original order – which is to say no longer mixed but back to the four elements from which all was created by God. Beyond the text, the illumination makes clear that the division between the earthly and the heavenly realms has been resolved, this unity also restoring clear vision. With the Last Judgment, eternity has arrived for all “those who ever had souls” – *a tous ceus que unkes aveyent alme* – as shown on the sign held by the winged angel in the frontispiece (fig. 3.6).

Fortune and Natura Naturans

The close connection between the first and the last part of the Holkham Bible may originate in the manuscript’s history, which we will turn to in the context of the frontispiece’s original position. But first, let us take a look at the *Rota Fortunae* on the reverse of that illumination. As we have seen, it was the scholar and translator Michael Scot who inaugurated a late twelfth-century shift in pairing the idea of *natura naturata*, a nature in which everything is created directly by God, with the idea of a *natura naturans*, a nature itself possessing creative force – concepts that were swiftly taken up by Scholasticism, most prominently in Alain de Lille’s *Anticlaudianus*. This intellectual shift forms the backdrop to images composed and arranged (but not painted) by the *semipoeta* and lawyer Francesco da Barberino (fig. 3.23).¹⁰ The oldest fully illuminated autograph of his encyclopedic poem *Documenti d’Amore* is kept today at the Bibliotheca Apostolica. In it we find an illumination that is in fact based precisely on the coexistence of Christ and *natura naturata* on the one hand and Fortuna and *natura naturans* on the other.

This first effort to visually depict that opposition constitutes a modification of the traditional representation of the Wheel of Fortune.¹¹ Shelley MacLaren has taken this work as a point of departure in examining Barberino’s search for innovative representations of complex ideas and his “desire to represent an image in keeping with ‘divine truth.’”¹² However, as Eva Frojmovic has argued, Barberino’s originality

10 Hans Belting observes that Filippo Villani described Francesco as a *semipoetae* in the *Liber de origine civitatis Florentiae et eiusdem famosis civibus*. For Villani, Francesco merited the title “not because he composed verses, but because he understood well the fictions of the poets” (*non pero che facesse versi, ma che intendeva bene le finzioni de’poeti*). Belting, “The New Role of Narrative,” 156.

11 Pisani, *L’iconografia della ruota*.

12 MacLaren, “Or guarda tu,” 222, with reference to Francesco da Barberino, *Documenti d’Amore*, 1:290–291: “Quia vero res est ista multum notabilis, huius fortune rotam sumpta fortuna ut dico tibi superius, et ipsius fortune quondam figuram, cum figuris aliis quas videbis, ut secundum veram intentionem stare



Fig. 3.23 God, Natura naturans and Wheel of Fortune, detail of fig. 3.22. Francesco da Barberino, *Documenti d'Amore*, Cod. Barb. lat. 4076, fol. 27r, Italy, 14th century, ink and pigments on parchment, 30 × 22.2 cm, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

lies in the invention of this particular image.¹³ In this composition, God, labeled *natura naturans*, sits on a throne at the far left holding a scroll,¹⁴ while a female personification at the center, *natura naturata*, turns the wheel, as is common in personifications of the virtue Fortuna (fig. 3.24). It was Barberino himself who instructed his illuminator to represent *natura naturata* based on traditions for depicting Fortuna. As Barberino arranged it, the two personifications are acting at some distance from the earth, which is shown at the far right; on the wheel

possit, tibi non tollendo vel minuendo de aliquorum gestibus seu dictis, nisi in quantum divina veritas detrahat, represento.”

13 Frojmovic, “Giotto’s Circumspection,” 200. The manuscript containing this image can be compared to another of Barberino’s manuscripts – the *Officiolum*, his private prayer book. That text reveals a conscious inscription and creative representation of authorship in a set of illustrations that, again, operate by combining and conflating existing pictorial traditions in original ways. Barberino thus articulates sophisticated reflections on the relationship between creation, time, and creativity.

14 The inscription on the scroll is a summary of the following passage in the *Documenta d'Amore* (1:294): “[dicit enim scripta] volve pro libito [idest secundum cursum tuum et morem.] infra celum [quasi dicat non intromittas te de sanctis et angelis qui sunt supra firmamentum in ipso cristallino cello nec de incomprehensibilis et infinita latitudine que supra est aut de potential ipsa sua inextimabili] quod iuxero semper salvo [sufficient ipsi deo pro mandato solum velle quod quidem absque ulla remissione implebitur naturata natura nec media nec iuvante cum omnibus presit immediate] hominem [dic virum et mulierem] vero [pro copula] sinas [idest formatum a nobis te aliquando iuxta nostrum imperium in hoc ministrante, sinas arbitrio illi dato a nobis] cui opera dant [scilicet statum bonum si bona] et tollunt [scilicet illi statum si mala].”



Fig. 3.24 Wheel of Fortune, detail of fig. 3.22. Francesco da Barberino, *Documenti d'Amore*, Cod. Barb. lat. 4076, fol. 27r, Italy, 14th century, ink and pigments on parchment, 30 × 22.2 cm, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

that Fortuna is turning, four people rise, stand up, topple over, and fall (fig. 3.25). Together, these figures circumscribe the earth or, better, “the world.” The rod with which Fortuna turns the wheel is attached to the earth’s core, which is surrounded by spheres, surrounded in turn by the fixed stars at the outer edge.

The opening words on the scroll the enthroned God is holding are legible, forming a playful pictorial reference to a speech scroll. The incorporation of this iconographic tradition of the author portrait, showing the author holding his work, is a striking element of this unique composition. We read the words *voluo pro libita infra celum quod impero semper salvo hominem vero sinus cui opera dant et tollunt* (“for pleasure I always turn who reigns under heaven and save the man with the true winding, which gives work and takes it”). What turns the wheel is not God but Fortuna, *natura naturata*, subject to *natura naturans*. Her wheel is the world, with the earth at its core, surrounded by water (*humifera*), air (*aera*), fire (*austus*), and heaven, as a final sphere with the fixed stars attached to it. Fortuna’s power, as part of *natura naturata*, does not reach beyond that sphere. Only the power of God, the Creator, does that.

But what does this mean for the human artist? The human figures are *prudens* (knowing, on top), *ingratus* (unacceptable, sinking), *piger* (lazy, at the bottom), and *sollicitus* (agitated, rising). This raises the question of whether the cyclical repetition is antithetical to true creativity. Like in the Holkham Bible, here we have a division in terrestrial and celestial spheres providing different conditions

impacting human and divine creativity. In the Holkham Bible the division runs between the lower (terrestrial) realm – the artist’s studio versus the upper (celestial) realm with ape and angel. In Francesco da Barberino’s conception the realms are divided along the horizontal axis, with the Divine Creator in the celestial sphere, *natura naturans*, and the wheel of fortune in the terrestrial sphere. But how does knowledge feature in this setup, and are there different types of knowing aligned to the opposing spheres?

We have already seen how the representation of God creating the cosmos, depicted facing the colored chaos of *terra* engaged with creation, in accounts in encyclopedic texts. The inclusion of the Wheel of Fortune opposite this miniature further suggests the intellectual context of the picture bible’s making. In light of all of this evidence we can say that encyclopedic texts contributed significantly to both the unique mode of illumination and the choice of motifs in the Holkham Bible (fig. 3.26, fig. 3.27, fig. 3.28, fig. 3.29, fig. 3.30, fig. 3.31). One of the most splendid illuminated encyclopedic manuscripts – Herrad of Landsberg’s *Garden of Delights* (*Hortus deliciarum*), lost in a fire of 1870 and now only available in a facsimile from 1818 – similarly showed Lady Fortune’s wheel and depicted chaos and the four elements; it also included an author’s portrait (fig. 3.32). But there the similarities stop: On a thematic level the manuscript lacked depictions of the creation of Adam and Eve and the Fall; and, regarding the artwork itself, the quality of the Holkham Bible is markedly different.

A number of apocryphal narratives recounting events from Christ’s childhood and the miracles have been identified as possible inspiration for the Holkham Bible’s miniatures and its Anglo-Norman text. These include the fourth book of Ezra, the Thomas Legend, Pseudo-Matthew, the *Legenda Aurea*, the fifteen signs legend (falsely attributed to the Venerable Bede), and an Anglo-Norman text relating Christ’s childhood – perhaps the text known in Latin as the *Gesta Infantiae Salvatoris* or *Liber de Infantia*.¹⁵ Vernacular religious plays also seem to have enriched this picture bible as we find references to popular culture and everyday life, knowledge of crafts, the world of craftsmen and soldiers, and contemporary political events.¹⁶

Through the analysis of such iconographic novelties, we have come to understand that the illuminator was active in London in the third decade of the fourteenth century and may have been a member of a Dominican monastery, although the exact scriptorium has not been identified thus far.¹⁷ However the material gets us

15 See Brown, “When Illuminated Manuscripts Are Not What They Seem,” 104. See also Kolter, “Sintflut und Weltgericht.”

16 Brown, *The Holkham Bible*, 18f.

17 Brown, *ibid.*, 21 suggests that, based on the habit worn by the commissioner on the frontispiece, the lay artist might be referring to St. Dominic and the Dominican practice of using images as devotional

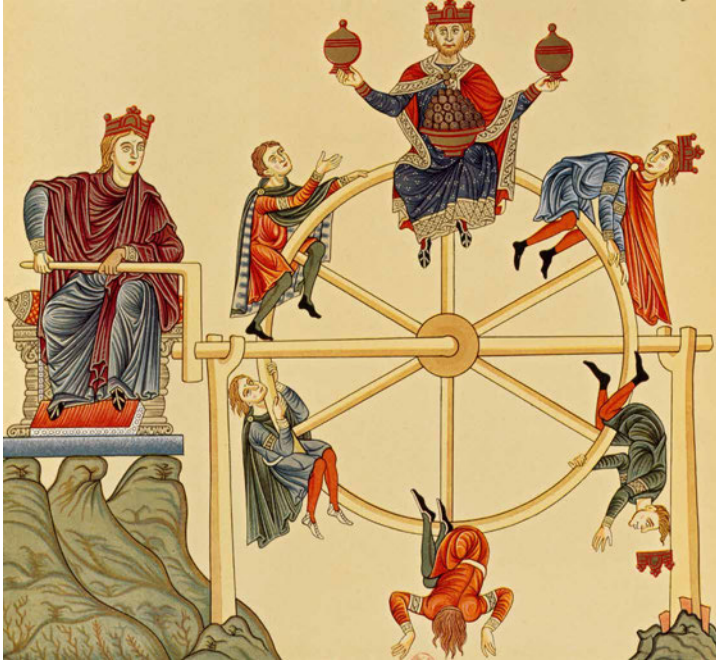


Fig. 3.25 Wheel of Fortune. Herrad of Landsberg, *Hortus deliciarum*, after 1175. Facsimile by Christian Moritz Engelhart (1818), manuscript burnt in 1870. The facsimile in Strasbourg contains 254 of the original 344 miniatures, here Planche XXXVII, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

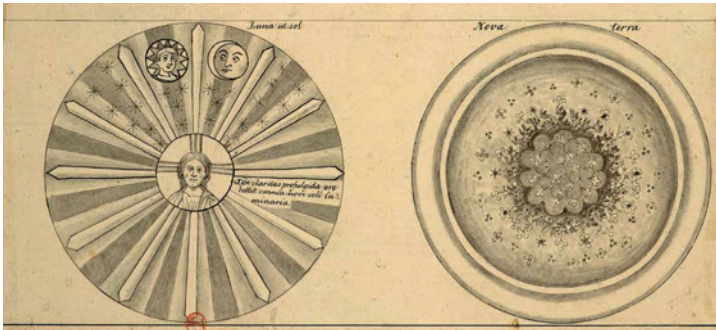


Fig. 3.26 End of Time. Herrad of Landsberg, *Hortus deliciarum*, after 1175. Facsimile by Christian Moritz Engelhart (1818), manuscript burnt in 1870. The facsimile in Strasbourg contains 254 of the original 344 miniatures, here fol. 247v, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 3.27 Adam naming the animals. Herrad of Landsberg, *Hortus deliciarum*, after 1175. Facsimile by Christian Moritz Engelhart (1818), manuscript burnt in 1870. The facsimile in Strasbourg contains 254 of the original 344 miniatures, here fol. 8v, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 3.28 Wheel of Fortune. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 1v, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

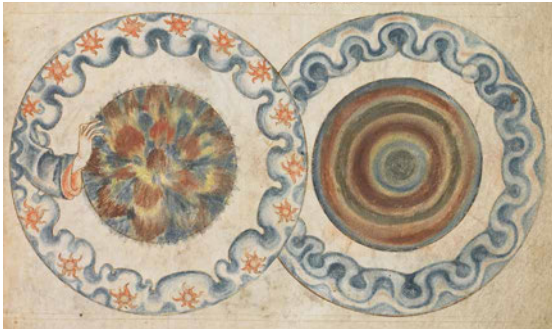


Fig. 3.29 End of Time. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 41r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.30 Adam naming the Animals. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 2v, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.31 Author portrait.
The Holkham Bible Picture Book, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 1r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

no closer to understanding the dynamics involved in the illuminator's reflections on the origins of his own creativity. In that respect, the use of unmixed brushstrokes of color set into washes of the same color and the mixing of color washes in the creation scenes represent a striking approach, one highly unusual in manuscript illumination. What appears to be its deeper meaning only emerges with close consideration of the frontispiece. The person connected to the celestial realm located

aids for both themselves and the laity. She also suggests that the manuscript was shown to the sort of prospective client who, "rather than a particularly poorly educated and popularist member of the Order of Preachers," would more likely have been a wealthy merchant or craftsman, living in London, who had "devotional links to St. Paul's and the Dominican convent of Blackfriars" and "enjoyed mystery plays and religious art."

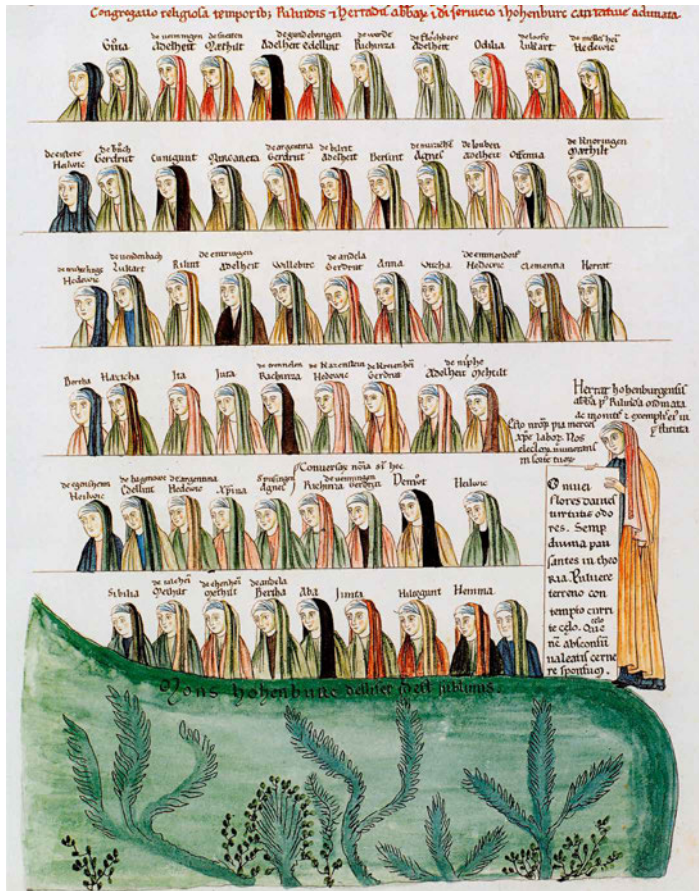


Fig. 3.32 Author portrait of Herrad. Herrad of Landsberg, *Hortus deliciarum*, after 1175. Facsimile by Christian Moritz Engelhart (1818), manuscript burnt in 1870. The facsimile in Strasbourg contains 254 of the original 344 miniatures, here page Planche XXX, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

in the upper zone of the illumination – through gaze, words, and apparel – is the artist, whose speech scroll is pointing up toward a small monkey.

Artists and Authors: The Holkham Bible’s Frontispiece

Opening the picture bible, we see a Dominican friar instructing an illuminator: “Now you will work well and thoroughly, for it will be shown to wealthy people” (*Ore feres bien e nettement car mustre serra a riche gent*).¹⁸ With barely hidden pride, the artist replies: “So I will indeed do it if God allows me to live; never will you see another such book” (*Si fray voyres se deux me doynt vivre; Unkes ne veyres un autretel livre*)

18 Freeman Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts*, 2:97; Binski, *Becket’s Crown*; Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, 54; Brown, *The Holkham Bible* (with extensive bibliography).

(see fig. 3.6).¹⁹ On the desk in front of him is his work in progress. Although in bad condition, we can discern a sheet of parchment with an unfinished portrait. We indeed find other thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century images of illuminators painting portraits (sometimes even self-portraits).²⁰ Leaving aside the question of whether the artist is actually depicting himself or whoever commissioned the manuscript, the painter in the Holkham Bible's frontispiece (fig. 3.31) is unique in regard to both elaborate composition and written self-expression – that is, the artist's words, their content, their context.²¹ These words refer explicitly to God as giving life to all creatures, and connect the artist at work with another craftsman mentioned in Genesis – Noah, charged by God with building an ark (depicted on fol. 7r of the Holkham Bible). In Norman French we read: “So build such a vessel – as the world has never seen” (*ore fé tot un tel vessel – ke u monde ne seyt un autel*).²²

The translation of the artist's first words, *si frai voyre* – literally as “so I will do truth” – arguably elides a double meaning, which is to say an important reference to what happens beyond the dialogue between commissioner and artist, above the workshop's vault on the upper part of the page.²³ This second meaning emerges when we recognize a possible play between *voyre* as “indeed” and *voyre* as *veer* (“see”) and between *frai* as “I will do” and *frai* as *verai* (“true”), furnishing us with a conceptual pun along the lines of “truthful seeing.” Such conceptual punning takes on credence when we consider the ape to the left of the baldachin above the studio. The creature is holding a mirror, thus emphasizing precisely such a dimension of truthful seeing or looking. The mirror of course has a long and meaningful tradition in biblical exegesis, devotional texts, and encyclopedic literature.²⁴ It received renewed attention as an allegorical concept that circulated widely in an era of expanding lay literacy and spirituality.²⁵ The presumption that

19 The most literal meaning of *voyres* is “true” or “truth,” but in this context it works as an adverb emphasizing the verb it follows, so translates as something like “indeed.” For help with the translation I would like to thank David Hult.

20 Brown, *The Holkham Bible*, suggests the artist is drawing a double portrait of a commissioning couple. But in my examination of the frontispiece I only recognize a single portrait – the bust of a person on the left with eyes looking toward the right half of the still unbound folio.

21 The ruling of the book's first section (up to fol. 9v) is in ink; the following folios (10r–13v) are ruled in lead point; both materials are used on fol. 14r; fol. 15r is ruled in ink, with lead point used from fol. 15v to fol. 18r. Both ink and lead point are used on fol. 18v, with lead point on fol. 19 and ink from fol. 19v onward. See Brown, *The Holkham Bible*, 8. The change in ruling, together with the empty page on fol. 9v, suggests that the frontispiece's original position was facing the Tree of Jesse on fol. 10r.

22 *Ibid.*, 31 and 38.

23 I here follow the translation by David Hult, personal communication.

24 Grabes, *Speculum, Mirror und Looking-Glass*; Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel*, 86–93, 201–252; Michel, *Präsenz ohne Substanz*.

25 Smith, *The Taymouth Hours*, 3, thus observes that “by c. 1300 the notion of the book as a ‘mirror’ or the self had become a cultural commonplace.” See also Aston, “Devotional Literacy”; Hamburger, “Medieval

“only with the ending of time will man regain a full ability to see truly and clearly perceive God” originates in the famous Pauline verses from the second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 3:18): “But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”²⁶ In that light, it seems to me that the ambivalence of the phrase *si frai voyre* is intentional and meaningful, revealing playful ingenuity on the part of the artist.

In the layout of the frontispiece this playful double meaning gains a special dimension. The artist receiving his commission is located in his atelier at the bottom of the page; on speech scrolls we read an unfolding dialogue between commissioner and illuminator while the artist draws a portrait on a piece of parchment. The person connected, through his gaze, to the sphere beyond the atelier, extending into the upper half of the frontispiece, is the artist; his speech scroll is pointing toward the monkey. We are viewing the artist at work, sitting in a room outlined by the frame of the baldachin, whose shape is similar to the upper outline of a Gothic blind arcade, crowned with a finial and flanked by two small towers. This architectural framework defines the visible world – the world to which we, the beholders, belong. Beyond this threshold, fleshy green leaves of acanthus grow out of the architectural structure. This zone beyond the vaulted atelier is animated with imaginary creatures and uses a different color scheme – brown, blue, and green.

The baldachin’s material is indefinable because the illuminator set layers of rainbow colors next to each other, ranging from red to yellow in the lower zone to fine layers of green and deep blue in the upper zone. The colors in the vertical pillar to the left follow the correct order of the rainbow.²⁷ Viewers in early fourteenth-century

Self-Fashioning”; Smith, “The Neville of Hornby Hours.”

26 “nos vero omnes revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes in eandem imaginem transformamur a claritate in claritatem tamquam a Domini Spiritu.” The other famous passage from Paul’s letters using the mirror metaphor is 1 Cor. 13:12: “videmus nunc per speculum in enigmate tunc autem facie ad faciem” (“We see now through a glass in a dark manner”). Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 8.14, comments on 2 Cor. 3:18. For him, the reflective process was inseparable from a process of self-awareness. He thus emphasizes that *speculantes* refers to *speculum* and not to *specula* as an aspect allowing the spectator an elevated overview (a reading made possible by the ambiguity of the translation from Greek to Latin). For Augustine, the viewer perceives not a visible object but himself or herself in an act of self-reflection, and through this *memoria* of God through which we experience our originary divine likeness. Truth for Augustine is located in the inner self, and introspection offers the path to its experience. See Pfeiffer, “Enigmata,” 145.

27 Not long before the composition of the Holkham Bible’s frontispiece illumination, between 1304 and 1311 Theodoric of Freiberg wrote a treatise on the rainbow and colors, *De iride et radialibus impressionibus*, where he explains the reversed color spectrum in the double rainbow. Earlier (probably 1225) Robert Grosseteste (d. 1253) had written his tract on optics, *De iride*, where he differentiated between direct vision, reflection, and refraction – ideas taken up by Roger Bacon in his *Opus majus* (1266–1267). Although up to 1300 the sequence of colors in depictions of single rainbows varies, starting in the fourteenth century the “correct” spectrum gradually predominates. Theofried’s writings were often copied but were not actively studied or commented upon – the only evidence for the latter appears in a 1514 note by the

England would have been struck by the resemblance to needlework, so-called *opus anglicanum*, evident here.²⁸ However, while in such needlework each thread is a single color, with gradation therefore achieved by stitching different colored threads alongside each other, in the Holkham Bible the multicolor washes merge and create new tones.

Two Realms, Two Creatures

The realm of the visible world of the Dominican friar (the commissioner) and the artist drawing his own portrait (fig. 3.31) consists of a rhombus-patterned wall enclosing individual oak leaves or bundles of three leaves in one rhombus (see fig. 3.6). Another layer of cross-hatching in a red tint fills the gaps between the fine brownish line drawings of leaves and the double rhomboid lines. Two speech scrolls unfold between friar and artist. The first, with red lines, hangs straight down toward the floor next to the monk, while the other, with brown lines, reaches up toward an area outside the studio's enclosed space. As mentioned above, this scroll points to the monkey holding a mirror – the world beyond the visible. At the top of the page a winged angel stretches his arms to hold a long inscription about the works and miracles of God “portrayed in this book” (*in ceo vivere est purtret*). His inscription has the form of an *enumeratio*, listing the works of the Divine Creator like an index outlining the content of the whole manuscript.

The monkey on the left of the page is paired with a hybrid creature on the right. No sufficient explanation has yet been offered for the inclusion of these two creatures and the angel in the Holkham Bible frontispiece.²⁹ To move toward such an explanation we need to take account of a development initiated by Alain de Lille in the *Anticlaudianus* – the use of *simian* (“ape”) as “likeness” or “reflection.”³⁰ By the late twelfth and thirteenth century the metaphorical use of *simia* had become commonplace, with notable vehicles for the metaphor's dissemination being encyclopedic

Erfurt theologian and philosopher Jodocus Trutfetter, *Summa in totam physicen*. In the first decade of the fourteenth century, the Persian natural philosopher Kamal al-Din al Farisi seems to have developed a theory of the rainbow strikingly similar to Trutfetter's. See Boyer, *The Rainbow*, 125–130; Sabra, *Theories of Light*, 62, n. 56; Heiberg and Wiedemann, *Ibn al Haitams Schrift über parabolische Hohlspiegel*.

28 Brown et al., *English Medieval Embroidery*. Brown, “When Illuminated Manuscripts Are Not What They Seem,” 108, has pointed to parallels with the Bologna Cope and the Wokyndon chasuble.

29 Brown, *The Holkham Bible*, 31, only comments briefly on these creatures: “On the roof of the arch sits a monkey who is probably defecating and who holds a mirror to his face – a medieval symbol of the aping of mankind's vanity, the speculum reflecting the soul. Opposite stands a grotesque with a spotted quadruped body and a male human head wearing a peasant's hood, signifying man's bestial nature.”

30 In this respect Werblowsky, “Ape and Essence,” 321, refers to a major “sidonian comeback” in the decades after de Lille.

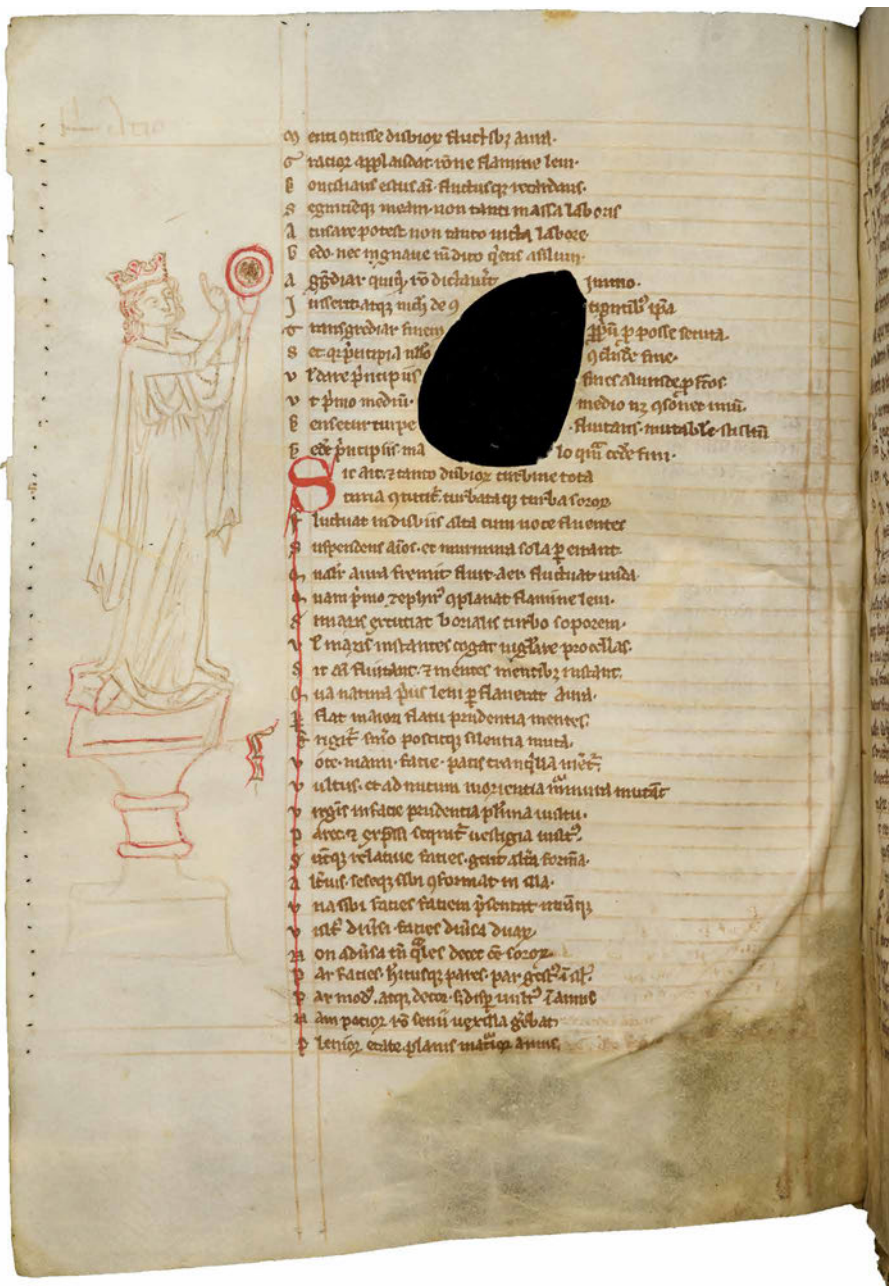


Fig. 3.33 Ratio holds up a mirror. Alain de Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, Ms. 59, fol. 10v, Verona (Italy), 13th century, ink on parchment, 20 x 13.5 cm, Oxford, Corpus Christi College.



Fig. 3.34 Prudentia, Giotto's cycle of allegories in the Arena Chapel, ca. 1303–1310, fresco, 120 × 60 cm, Cappella Scrovegni, Musei Civici, Padua.

tracts such as Hildegard of Bingen's *Physica*, Alexander Neckam's *De naturis rerum*, Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum*, and Thomas Cantimpré's *De natura*. We find this development reflected in one particular passage of Alain de Lille's *Anticlaudianus* describing the pictures in the palace of nature as *picturaque simia veri*:

Hic hominum mores picture gracia scribit:
Sic operi proprio pictura fideliter heret,
Vt res picta minus a uero deuiet esse.

O noua picture miracula! Transit ad esse
Quod nichil esse potest picturaque simia ueri,
Arte noua ludens, in res umbracula rerum
Vertit et in uerum mendacia singula mutat

Here the beauty of the picture inscribes the characters of men. The painting faithfully fastens its attention on its special project, so that the representation may the less depart from reality. Oh new wonders of painting! What can have no real existence comes into being, and painting, aping reality and diverting itself with a new art, turns the shadows of things into things and changes every lie into truth.³¹

This passage reveals de Lille's familiarity with the idea that painting only imitates "the shadows of things" (*umbracula rerum*). The described pictures in the palace of nature are not made by human hands; they are as unreal as the palace itself. The shadows are turned into things through painting, although not painting made by human hands. Importantly, de Lille is not addressing real painting here, but rather offering a metaphor of a Platonic idea of representation and its relationship to seen reality.³² In de Lille's allegory, the discrepancy between a picture's imperfect nature and the true nature of its original appearance is resolved – the house of nature reverses Plato's theory of ideas. Things come into being not from their highest order, the idea, but from the opposite side, the picture or simulacra.

As we have already seen, the Holkham Picture Bible owes more to this encyclopedic tradition than has been recognized thus far. Two contemporaneous examples can help us better understand the unique and ingenious way the frontispiece suggests a relationship between the sphere of the illuminator at work and a second, imaginary sphere above that contains very different modes of creation – composite creatures, allegorical figures, and *enumeratio*. The first example is a drawing from the Veronese manuscript illustrating the *Anticlaudianus*, where the personification of *ratio* holds up the mirror (fig. 3.34).³³ The second example is Giotto's cycle of allegories in the Arena Chapel: Right after entering the room through the former entrance, viewers encounter the personification of Prudentia with a mirror (fig. 3.35); the vice of *stultitia* (foolishness) is on the opposite wall.

Eva Frojmovic observes that Prudentia in general "incorporates a play on metaphors of vision, and, in fact, transposes the figure of God the draftsman onto a Virtue that implicates the viewer, once again grounding the efficacy of the artwork in the viewer's experience." She also points out that Prudentia represents both intellectual and artistic labor – and even, as is the case with the Holkham

31 De Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, 49; translated and modified by Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry*, 245.

32 Seiler, "Trovare cose non vedute," 119.

33 De Lille, *Anticlaudianus*. See also Pollack, "Die Dialektik der Dinge"; Newman, *God and the Goddesses*; Meier, "Die Rezeption des Anticlaudianus"; Ochsenein, *Studien zum Anticlaudianus*; Modersohn, *Natura als Göttin im Mittelalter*.



Fig. 3.35 Composite creature. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, Pluteo 34.12, fol. 61v, Italy, end of the 12th century, ink on parchment, 23.7 × 14.5 cm, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.

Bible, artistic labor as intellectual labor.³⁴ As we see in that picture bible, the artist's studio is a venue for a personification combining memory and foresight in front of a mirror. The imaginary sphere is an extension of the artist's vision that is parodied by the monkey in the upper sphere. Giotto and the illuminator of the Holkham Bible, contemporaries of each other, reflect "in" their images the same idea in different ways. In contrast to the Holkham frontispiece, Giotto shows *his* Virtue drawing in a book with a compass, the attribute of the architect, engineer, and draftsman; and last, but not least of God, the divine architect, as we have seen. In our miniature, the artist depicts himself not measuring or ordering, but drawing a portrait (or portraits), maybe his self-portrait, in a manuscript within a studio.³⁵

34 Frojmovic, "Giotto's Circumspection," 204–205.

35 See Brown, "When Illuminated Manuscripts Are Not What They Seem." Brown would also like to identify the author wearing a cap over his blond locks in several other figures embedded in bigger crowds. However, the same type of bystander also appears with red locks, and not just in scenes showing John

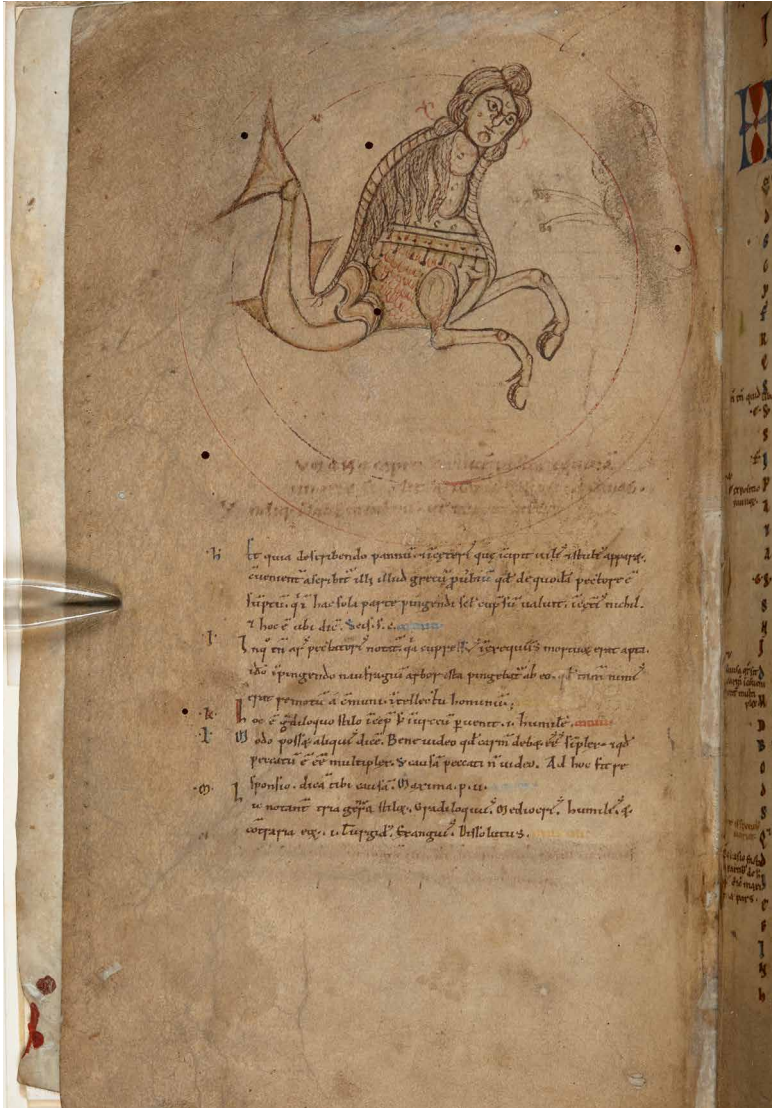


Fig. 3.36 Composite creature. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, Royal MS 15 B VII, fol. 3v, Germany (?), 12th century, ink on parchment codex, 28.5 × 21.0 cm, London, British Library.

As a *Bild im Bild* (picture in a picture) made by the artist, on the very same page he is also inventing an allegory – the monkey with the mirror, drawn with brownish ink embedded in an imaginary world, the realm beyond his studio.

the Baptist as she suggests. It seems to me that depicting the figure with a cap is a result of *variatio*, an artistic attempt to diversify the group of bystanders.

Frojmovic has raised the question of why, if Giotto's Prudence is drawing a self-portrait (as the mirror indicates), she is using a compass rather than a brush or a pen. The solution offered is that, with the choice of this particular tool, the artist is emphasizing that the draftsman is drawing *per scientiam*, not merely to imitate nature. It would appear that, in the artist's choice of ape and mirror for the Holkham Bible, we find an emphasis not on *scientia* but on the ingenious play with different realms, demonstrated by the depiction of reality and an imaginary sphere on the same page.

The ingenious pairing of a monkey and composite creatures helps us understand something about the Holkham Bible that has so far escaped attention. It shows an ingenious self-portrait of an artist playfully combining ironic, witty references to Alain de Lille (with the *simia* metaphor) and Horace's advice in the *Ars Poetica* not to mix different parts to create a new creature within different modes of representation – with, precisely, the hooded composite creature (see more below).³⁶ In trying to explain the combination of two modes of illustration in the picture bible, art historians have suggested that they were created by two hands: one a draftsman and the other an artist applying the painted elements.

On the one hand, it seems to me that the lines of de Lille cited above help us understand the consciously displayed opposition between line and content, between contour and painted matter; or, to use the terms elaborated in Renaissance art theory, *disegno* and *colore*. But, at the same time, I would argue that what we see here is an illuminator's original invention aimed at capturing the power of images to turn ideas and mental images into visible truth. The artist is demonstrating his own ability to create a pictorial formula oscillating between the mirroring, de Lille-recalling monkey on the left and the composite, Horace-recalling creature on the right.

Through the Horace reference, we are presented with an implicit argument against restricting creative fantasy and the creative mind. The artist is *making* something, as encapsulated in the invention of new creatures rather than the mere combination of existing ones (fig. 3.35, fig. 3.36, fig. 3.37).³⁷ Never before have we seen such a thing: He is depicting a *creation ex nihilo* (something from nothing), requiring innovation and an approach to making something profoundly original. This recalibration can be noted in the shift from a female chimera in a late twelfth-century Italian illumination for the *Ars poetica* (fig. 3.36) to a male monk-like, quadruped creature in the frontispiece of the Holkham Bible – comprising the leg of a leopard, the claw of a raptor, the tail of a dragon, and the head of a hooded monk (complete with rimmed spectacles).

36 Horatius Flaccus Quintus, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*.

37 For illuminated manuscripts of Horace's text see Niehr, "Horaz in Hildesheim."



Fig. 3.37 Tree of Jesse. *Speculum virginum*, fragment, Inv. Nr. 15326, 12th century, 33.6 × 23.5 cm, Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum. The folio originates from a manuscript in the library of St. Matthias in Trier and was acquired by the parish of Rheinbrohl.

The artist in the Holkham frontispiece (fig. 3.6, fig. 3.31) is also directly revealing his reflection on two types of creativity: one is normative, designing illuminations with compasses and following iconographic traditions and standard practices of drawing and painting; and the other is subversive, working against genres by juxtaposing drawing and painting within the same miniature and using various elements of animals and humans to create composite creatures. This points to the nature of reflections on normativity in allegorical compositions that reveal the illuminator's knowledge of Alain de Lille and Horace. In his *Ars poetica* Horace explicitly argues against combining different animals to create new creatures, and Alain de Lille explicitly mentions an ape (*simia*), and plays with the double reference to simile, a likeness.

Enumeration and Imagination

We have considered the contrast between imagination and composition presented in the Holkham Bible's frontispiece, represented as two allegorical creatures – unoriginal monkish learning and potentially foolish yet innovatively playful nature. We still need to look at the angel unfolding his wings presiding over a list of the picture bible's contents. The angel's list is divided into two columns aligned opposite the two fantastical creatures.

Right column:

In ceo livere est purtret
 Meyn dé miracle que deux a fet,
 E dedenz est escryt
 Coment Ihesu de Mari natquyt,
 E tretute sa passioun
 E sa resurexioun

In this book are portrayed
 Many that God has made
 And within is written
 How Jesus was born of Mary,
 And his treats of his Passion
 And his Resurrection,

Left column:

E coment yl suffryt la mort
 E meyn des hountes a grant tort

E yl tuz iurs lé malade garyt
 Por ceo l'en out de luy despyt.
 Grant amor yl nous a fet,
 loye avera que en luy cret.³⁸

And of how he suffered death
 And many unjust indignities
 And yet he always healed the sick
 For which some despised him
 He showed us great love
 Those who believe in him will know joy.

The list is written from the upper to the lower left, and continues on the upper to the lower right, following the content of the depicted stories. The reader is presented with a sharp contrast between the two columns: On the left (above the monkey), divine signs and elements of the Christological narrative are clothed in highly positive terms such as “birth” and “resurrection,” while the nouns in the right-hand column (above the composite creature in the guise of a monk) have a negative tenor: death, indignity, sickness, contempt juxtaposed with Christ’s great love and the promise of salvation. Only the first two lines on the left and the last two lines on the right frame this opposition between divine wonder and human wickedness. The frame also contains a meaningful opposition of verbs, as if offering a potential choice for the beholder and reader – between portraying/making and showing/believing.

Whether this arrangement is deliberate or random coincidence, the natural creature (the monkey with mirror) and the monkish creature with spectacles are aligned with divine signs on the left and human suffering on the right. As already observed, the two creatures are linked to the opposing sides in the register below, the illuminator’s atelier. In short, the artist’s action of portraying and creating divine signs is mediated through the monkey with his mirror, while the composite bespectacled creature is connected to the commissioning monk’s action as showing and believing.

Enumeration, the reading of macro- and microdimensions of a list’s order, was common practice in both scholastic treatises and (written) manuscript design. In this case, the list on the angel’s board is also tied to a distinct tradition of ordering knowledge in visual shapes. Within this tradition, allegorical depictions for systematically and commemoratively displaying knowledge often address human norms: the question of how one should behave in order to maintain the necessary balance between macrocosm and microcosm. Formally, the placement of the

38 For a direct (non-interlinear) translation see Burnett, “Undeciphered Inscriptions in the Holkham Bible,” 27.

angel's feet in the flourishing bush of (thrice-drawn) oak leaves was probably composed as an analogy to the Tree of Life on the opposite parchment. The angel is positioned at the same height as the upper register of the tree, along with the four birds, the two kings (Solomon and David), and the two prophets (Abraham and Isaiah), while the illuminator's studio is aligned with Jesse at the bottom of the page, and the lower two registers with other prophets. This manifest but somewhat hidden reference to a tree may have reminded viewers of one of the most widespread allegorical motifs – the Tree of Knowledge or Tree of Life; or, perhaps most relevant here, allegorical images of the Tree of Love propagating vices and virtues affecting human lives.³⁹ The *arbor scientiae* and *arbor amoris* were widespread allegorical images illustrating knowledge in the shape of a tree in texts and manuscript illuminations.⁴⁰

Jean Wirth has argued that the relationship between fiction and reality in medieval doctrines of being was regulated by way of the so-called Porphyrian tree (or Tree of Porphyry) – the central symbol within an ancient diagrammatic tradition, received and interpreted by Boethius, allowing classification of all phenomena so that the degree of reality of things can be defined.⁴¹ Through the *arbor porphyriana*, matter could be separated into its animate and inanimate forms: the animate variety was then further divided into the sensate and insensate; sensate matter into what was capable of cognition and what was not; and, finally, matter capable of cognition was divided into the mortal and the immortal. In this classificatory system, human beings are defined as material, living, sensate, cognizant, and mortal. Animals rank below as sensate living beings incapable of cognition, and trees as cognitively incapable and insensate living beings. And yet, despite all classificatory precision, the Porphyrian tree could not explain all the problems of being. For instance, it provided no answer to the seemingly simple question of whether unicorns exist.

The close relationship between medieval allegoresis and scholarly theories of cognition has been analyzed in detail by Christel Meier-Staubach, who lays out the ways in which diagrams in the shape of trees depict kinship and family relationships,

39 Trees of life are also found in the Occitan *Breviari d'Amor* of Matfre Ermengau(d) (d. 1322), a Franciscan law expert and author of troubadour poetry. Structured like a tree of love, his text begins with a study of God and the creation. The Trinity plays an important role at the beginning, as in *Convenciole da Prato's* praise of Robert of Anjou. After a study of nature, a third part is dedicated to the love of God. These trees may have had Spanish roots, the *arbor Jesse* in Alfonso the Wise's scriptorium (LHS 04 HB 8 Skriptorium Alfonso X).

40 See Kamber *Arbor amoris*. In his review of Kamber's book, Steer, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, emphasizes that the Franciscan author of the vernacular tract "Arbor amoris" was following practices of biblical exegesis, and not rules of preaching structured like a symbolic tree.

41 Wirth, "Jardin des délices."

and how trees are used to represent complex theological thoughts.⁴² Madeline Caviness has emphasized the importance of the diagrammatic mode for linking patterns of thought and ways of framing reality; she compares the perception of such patterns and frameworks with what Richard of Saint Victor classified as the “third mode of seeing.”⁴³ As Jeffrey Hamburger points out, this represents “a way of perceiving reality that, in Richard’s theological nomenclature, stood just short of incorporeal, intellectual vision, and that in modern, art-historical terms, stands independent of time-bound classifications of style.”⁴⁴ The most widespread of the diagrams in play here was the tree of consanguinity or blood relationship, *arbor consanguinitatis*, displaying a family’s genealogy in the shape of a tree, and used for determining kinship in order to prevent incestuous marriages.

Starting in the Carolingian period, these diagrams displayed vegetable ornament; particularly in the fourteenth century, however, an increase in tree-like features can be observed.⁴⁵ A brief juxtaposing comparison of two trees, each illuminating widely distributed texts dealing with the question of how a married couple on the one hand and a nun on the other should live properly demonstrates the range of contexts in which such trees could be embedded. One is a Tree of Jesse illustrating a twelfth-century *Speculum virginum* manuscript (fig. 3.38);⁴⁶ the other a tree diagram serving as a frontispiece for the vernacular tract *Filosofia de Amor*, written by Ramon Llull in 1298 (fig. 3.39).⁴⁷ Ladner emphasizes that these trees were not meant to be just logical diagrams but also to “symbolize the grades of being.”⁴⁸ In depictions of the evergreen *lignum vitae*, the creation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Paradise at the root of the tree can be read as a commentary on their new life beyond the godly, intended order – like the tree and the diagrams surrounding depictions of the life of Christ.⁴⁹

42 Meier-Staubach, “Die Quadratur des Kreises.” See also Siegel, “Wissen, das auf Bäumen wächst”; Domínguez Reboiras et al., *Arbor scientiae*.

43 Caviness, “Images of Divine Order.”

44 Hamburger, “Haec figura demonstrat,” 8.

45 Bogen and Thürlemann, “Jenseits der Opposition von Text und Bild,” 12–15.

46 London, Ms. Arundel, fol. 114v, Tree of Jesse in the *sedes sapientiae*, *Speculum Virginum*, Rhineland, 1140s. Color reproduction in Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, “Die Stellung der Buchkunst.” See also Fassler, “Mary’s Nativity.”

47 Yale University, MS 416, fols. 6r and 5v.149. Ladner, “Medieval and Modern Understanding of Symbolism,” 252–253: “In this context, Ramon Lull, the great Catalanian of the late thirteenth century made perhaps the fullest use of the tree as a symbol of the graded participation, which is the only mode of unification existing between God and creatures. His *Arbre de ciencia*, written in 1295 as a more organically symbolic version of his famous *Ars generalis*, is an immense encyclopedia, striving for unification of knowledge. Lull’s *Arbre de filosofia d’amor* from 1298 contains the complementary theory of man’s love for God.”

48 Ladner, “Medieval and Modern Understanding of Symbolism,” 253.

49 Preisinger, *Lignum vitae*, 132–134.

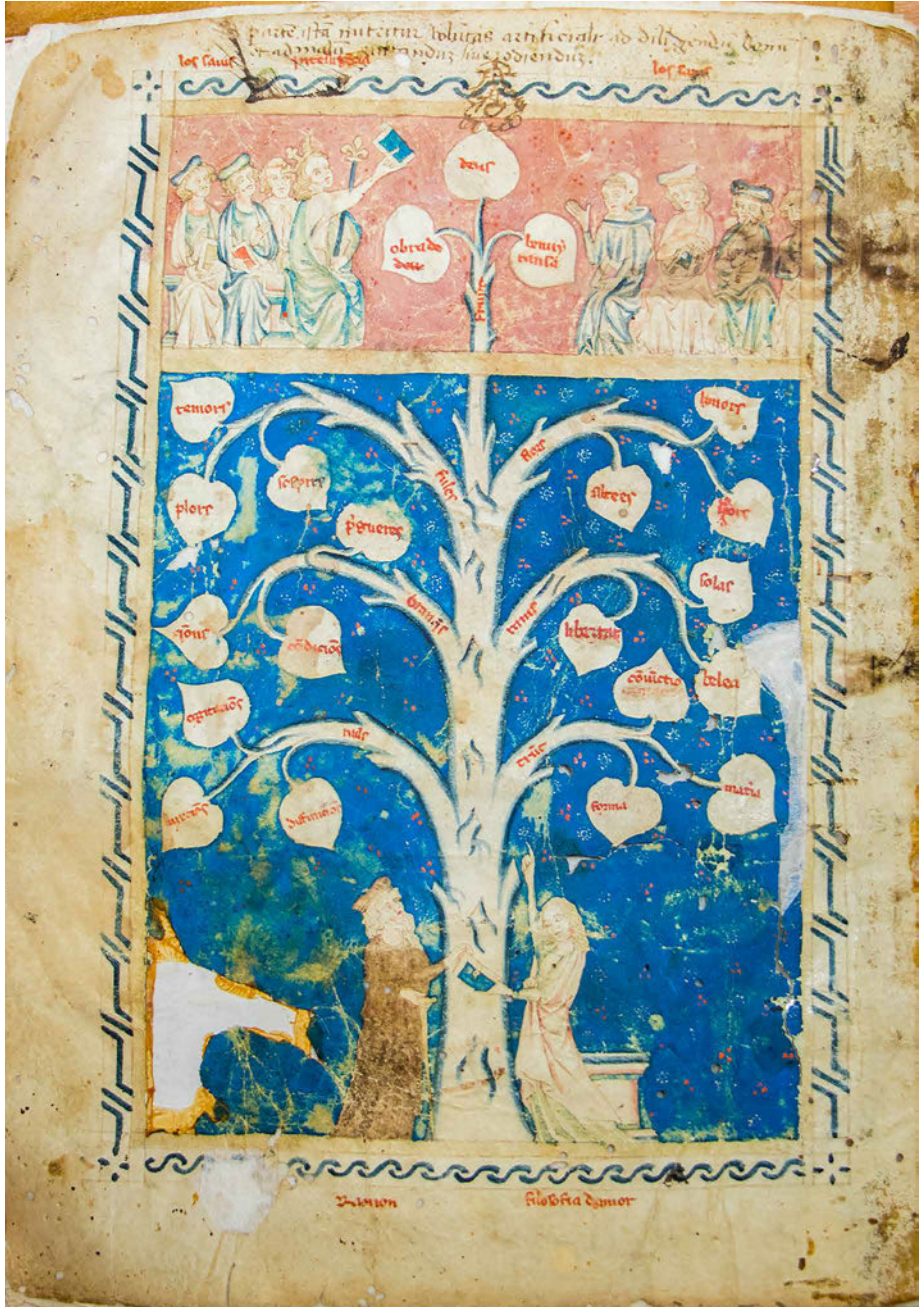


Fig. 3.38 Árbol de filosofía de amor. Ramon Llull, *Canto de Ramon, Libro del gentil y de los tres sabios*, Ms. F-129, fol. 6, Catalonia (Spain), end of 13th/beginning of 14th century, 24 x 18.2 cm, Biblioteca Diocesana de Mallorca.



Fig. 3.39 Tree of Life depicting various stages of a man's life cycle, from baptism to absolution. Brunetto Latini, *Trésor*, ms. plut. 42.19, fol. 96r, Italy, first quarter of 14th century, 34.6 x 23.5 cm, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.

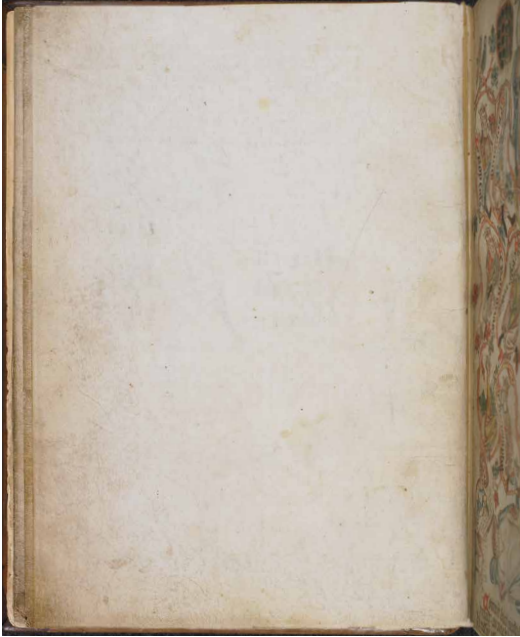


Fig. 3.40 Empty page. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 9v, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

In a manuscript of Brunetto Latini's *Trésor*, we encounter a profane version of the Tree of Life depicting various stages of a man's life cycle, from baptism to absolution (fig. 3.40). They begin with a child in his mother's arms, reaching out from her embrace, and end with contemplative prayer at the center of the tree's crown. The viewer moves up the branches, with their images of solitary and silent reading, to encounter three scenes at the top representing the "development of the curious and amorous self." Jean Campbell has pointed out that this miniature "represents the relation between vernacular love poetry and the type of knowledge with which Brunetto and his worthy readers were concerned. The two scenes surmounting the vignette of the mother and child both partake of familiar lyric topoi, thus tying the temporal and allusive imagery of troubadour verse into a biographical structure."⁵⁰

The tree in the *Speculum virginum* provides the meditating beholder with rich pickings hidden as inscriptions in and between the leaves, on the branches, and surrounding the tiny enclosed figures embraced by the leaves of the tree. Margot Fassler reveals the importance of the *Stirps Jesse* chant in illuminating Hrabanus Maurus's treatise on the cross and its incorporation of quotations from the responsory attributed to Fulbert of Chartres, in general, as well the particular adoption by Hildegard of Bingen.⁵¹ On the root and tree trunk in the *Speculum*

⁵⁰ Campbell, *Commonwealth of Nature*, 32.

⁵¹ Fassler, "Mary's Nativity." For an introduction to Hildegard's conception of the Jesse Tree image, see Fassler, "Composer and Dramatist." Fulbert's chant, *Stirps Jesse*, was sung in the liturgy of the Disibodenberg

virginum manuscript we read words from Fulbert's responsory – *Radix Jesse: uirgo dei genitrix uirga est* ("Root of Jesus: the virgin who gave birth to God is a branch").⁵² In the playful use of *virgo* (virgin) and *virga* (branch), Christ's double origin and divine power are made evident for viewers of this page. The power originating in a root in this picture may turn into thought and inspiration for the beholder in the process of looking, reading, and meditating. While the veins made of words and the curling leaves interlace, the perception of the tree's fruit could start anywhere: at the roots, with the embedded figures, in the curling leaves, or following the inscriptions on the branches.

In the Holkham Bible's frontispiece, viewers are guided through the gazes of the depicted persons in a similar way, through realms of different realities; the imaginative process structures the process of perceiving the composition. In the twelfth century, Hugh of Saint Victor explicitly uses the terms *figura* and *allegorein* to refer to the Tree of Life. He interprets the center column of his Mystic Ark as such a tree, alluding to Christ and his supporting role as the center of both ark and church.⁵³ Hugh's reference to the Tree of Life has its source in a specific exegetical tradition: that of linking the trees described in the New Testament's first and last books, Genesis and Revelation. The Tree of Knowledge is located in the middle of Paradise (Gen. 2:9), while the Tree of Life is located at a river. It bears a different fruit each month (Rev. 22:2–3; Gen. 2:9 also refers to a Tree of Life);⁵⁴ its leaves bring salvation to the people; and sitting inside the tree is the throne of God, with the Lamb.

While many of these references linking different pages within picture bible manuscripts rely on typology, we find no direct typological oppositions of Old

monastery, and Hildegard certainly knew it well.

52 For transcriptions of other texts found in the illumination see Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse*, 132–133.

53 Prica, *Heilsgeschichten*, 123: "Hugo deutet die Säule auf den Baum des Lebens und auf Jesus Christus hin und leitet die Erklärung zur stützenden Mittelposition sowohl der Säule in Bezug auf die Arche als auch Christi in Bezug auf die Kirche durch den Satz Cuius mysterium hoc est CC CLXXXVI, 126 ein." See Hugo of St. Victor, *De archa Noe. libellus*: CC CLXXXVI, 126: "Cuius mysterium hoc est. Columpna Christus est. Australe latus eius, quod diuinitatem ipsius significat, lignum uite uocatur et ideo uiridi colore superductum est. Aquilonare uero latus, quod humanitatem eius figurat, liber uite dicitur et hoc saphirino colore superductum est. Columpne archa innititur, et Christo innititur Ecclesia sua, quia nimirum stare nullatenus posset nisi ipse eam sustineret, secundum quod scriptum est in Canticis canticorum: 'Que est ista que ascendit dealbata, innixa super dilectum suum?'"

54 Rev. 22:2–3: "In the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ... [T]he throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." Other biblical quotes related to the Tree of Life include Psalm 1:3 ("And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in good season; his leaf shall not wither") and Song of Solomon 2:3 ("As the apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired: and his fruit was sweet to my taste.")

and New Testament in any illuminations in the Holkham Bible, beyond the angel's enumeration of contents in the frontispiece.

It seems important to view these adaptations of the *Stirps Jesse* within the aforementioned emphasized efforts of encyclopedic tracts to negotiate biblical content and new knowledge produced by natural philosophers – knowledge itself assimilating a body of newly translated ancient texts and newer knowledge produced by Islamic scholars and translated into Latin. Furthermore, with the introduction of two Trees of Jesse displaying genealogy, the connection between visualizing knowledge in the form of a tree and the implicit allusion to the Tree of Knowledge in Genesis depicted just a few pages earlier is given firmer visual foundation.⁵⁵ The angel in the frontispiece is spreading out the contents of the following pages, illuminating stories from the Old and New Testament. Furthermore, the illuminations in the picture bible reveal a deep familiarity with encyclopedic knowledge, probably originating in the *Speculum* tradition or inspired by texts taught in scholastic schools, such as Boethius's *Consolatio philosophiae*, de Lille's *Anticlaudianus*, and Comestor's *Historia scholastica*.⁵⁶ What is new, and truly innovative, is the emphasis on the beholder's imagination for drawing connecting lines between the monkey, the monk, and the monasterial – or Trinitarian – angel.

Buds and Birds: Reconsidering the Frontispiece's Position

As mentioned earlier, the condition of the quire we observe now in the Holkham Bible – blank pages and the remains of cut pages (fig. 3.41) – is insufficient for a reconstruction of the manuscript's original composition.⁵⁷ Michelle Brown has suggested that the manuscript's second part, starting with the Tree of Jesse, presents “the original project” encompassing the third to the tenth quires, which all contain four leaves, with the exception of a fifth leaf added to the ninth quire, containing

55 The Junius 11 manuscript discussed earlier also contains a cumulative portrayal of the Tree of Knowledge with its depiction on eleven drawings (11, 13, 20, 24, 28, 31 above, 31 below, 34, 39, 41, and 44). For a discussion of these see Grimes, “Tree(s) of Knowledge in the Junius Manuscript.” Grimes, 321, discusses the different exegetical traditions incorporating the opposition of the two paradisaical trees in Augustine's *De genesi ad litteram* – the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil as a test of Adam's virtue – and speaks of the “advantage of connecting the Old Testament narrative to New Testament ideas and clarifying the antithesis of the fall versus redemption.” Grimes also points to the theme of fruitfulness on p. 13 of the manuscript and the depiction of the three trees of knowledge “rife with sexual nuance” (332). The similarity between the trees' flowers and the shape of the male and female genitals is discussed in Karkov, “Margins and Marginalization,” 61.

56 Pickering, *The Anglo-Norman Text of the Holkham Bible*, xi–xv.

57 Brown, *The Holkham Bible*, 25–26. Brown discusses the late addition of the Ascension and the empty leaf, and its interruption of the Arabic numeric sequence of signatures.



Fig. 3.41 Mary, embedded in the first Tree of Jesse with the twelve Old Testament prophets. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 10r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.42 Second Tree of Jesse, showing the descent of Christ from Abraham, with St. Matthew on the left holding a scroll and writing on it in cursive script. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 10v, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

the Ascension.⁵⁸ I am inclined to share Brown's speculation that the frontispiece may have been planned for another location: that it may have been composed as the frontispiece for that original project containing the two Trees of Jesse and a juxtaposed Christological cycle. If this is the case, then the sequence would have opened with the two trees, followed by the evangelists, and the argument between Satan and Christ, before then beginning the cycle of the life of Christ with the Annunciation.

Visual evidence in support of this hypothesis, supplementing the codicological analysis, emerges when we take a closer look at the visual analogies between the frontispiece and the first Tree of Jesse. Mary, embedded in the Tree of Jesse with the twelve Old Testament prophets (fig. 3.41), is standing on a flowering bud, as is the angel on the frontispiece (fig. 3.6). The prophet writing at his desk in the lower left corner next to Jesse's head would have offered an analogy to the painting monk of the frontispiece holding knife and feather. The Wheel of Fortune would either have been inserted later – after plans for the manuscript had changed – or following the story of Noah, a good match with its plentitude of rising and fallen figures. Seen in this light, it appears likely that the frontispiece was composed as a counterpart to the Tree of Jesse, with the prophets and the theme's continuation on the second Tree of Jesse on the verso (fig. 3.42). In line with this function, the frontispiece showing the illuminator at his desk would have been followed by a series of matching images embedded in the two Trees of Life: Within the tree, we encounter a commissioning monk, drawing illuminator, and writing prophets and evangelists, with Matthew again holding a scroll announcing the beginning of his gospel (above the rows of thirty-seven heads in the tree and the figures seated in the tree above Jesse).

The scroll announcing the passion does not contain any mention of the scenes from the Old Testament; there is no reference to either Genesis or Noah. Instead we find direct mention of divine miracles as well as of Jesus's birth, passion, and resurrection. In light of these observations it appears that the frontispiece was made for the New Testament cycle beginning with the two Trees of Jesse and the evangelists and their symbols (fig. 3.43 and 3.44). This would harmonize far better with the "table of contents" in the angel's hand (see fig. 3.6). It would also explain the manifold visual allusions comprising similar elements – the angel and Mary on flower buds, Saint Matthew at his writing desk – related to the illuminator sitting at his desk painting a portrait (fig. 3.6).⁵⁹ Even the already noted vertical division

58 *Ibid.*, 26.

59 "How St. Matthew, of all four evangelists, was the first to speak and preach about, and then put into scripture, the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. And how he was to be born, like man, from a maiden and would deliver all those who were lost. And on account of this is sung the genealogy in holy Church on the three feasts of the year – Christmas Day, the Conception of Our Lady and the Nativity of



Fig. 3.43 Mark writing on a scroll, with a winged lion holding a small scroll; Luke starting to write on a scroll, with a winged bull holding a small scroll. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 11r, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.



Fig. 3.44 John with his eagle, dispute between Christ and Satan, and the Annunciation. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, Add. MS 47682 (former Holkham MS 666), fol. 11v, London (England), 1327–1335, ink and pigments on parchment, 28.5 × 21 cm, London, British Library.

of imaginary and “real” sphere in the frontispiece could find its equivalent in the division into a celestial realm containing Mary and the winged birds (parrot, peacock, owl, and goldfinch) and an earthly sphere below. Finally, we have the possible alignment of parrot and peacock on the left with the frontispiece’s ape and mirror, and the owl and goldfinch on the right with the frontispiece’s hooded monk and spectacles.

Within their allegorizations of birds, Isidor of Seville and Hrabanus Maurus mostly follow the descriptions found in Pliny and Ovid.⁶⁰ In his *Physiologus*, Hugo of Saint Victor describes the night raven (*Nycticorax*) as a lover of the dark, following the owl (*Noctua*), which for Hugo is a symbol of Christ. He compares the eagle owl (*bubu*) to a sinner chased and mocked by other birds, following Isidor and Hrabanus in adopting a moralizing tone.⁶¹ We find the goldfinch (*Carduelis*) praised for its fertility – its proclivity for laying twelve eggs – and its habit of eating the seeds of thistles, rendering it an apt symbol for Christ.⁶² The goldfinch will later have a role as an attribute of the child Jesus, often carried in his hands, a motif already found in the Psalter of Robert de Lisle in the early fourteenth century.⁶³ The abundance of birds within the first folios of the Holkham Manuscript’s original form, including the eagle of St. John, again indicates the illuminator’s knowledge and use of encyclopedic texts, in this case bestiaries.⁶⁴

Our Lady. And he showed the Man to man by example, because he spoke of humanity ... Coment Seyn Matheu qi que primerement en parla et sarmunoyt e qi [/que] unkes mettoyt en escripture de touz lé catre ewangelistes le humanité de nostre signiour Ihesu Crist. E coment il serroyt nee sicum humme de une pucele e diliveroyt touz cues [/cues] que estoyent perdouz. E por ce l'en chaunte en seynte egyse la genealogie les treys festes de l'an: le iour de Noel. la Conceptcion nostre dame. e la Nativité nostre dame. E se mettoyt Homine homme par exemple purceo por ceo que qi yl parla de Humantité.”

60 Isidor of Seville, *Etimologias*, XII, 7, 38–39: “Avis feralis, onusta quidem plumis, sed gravi semper detenta pigrizia: in sepulcris die noctuque versatur, et semper commorans in cavernis” – with reference to Ovid: “Foedaque fit volucris venturi nuntia luctus / ignavus bubo dirum mortalibus omen.” Hrabanus Maurus follows Isidor’s moralizing: “Noctua homines, veritatis lucem fugientes, tenebris obligatos significat” and “Bubo tenebris peccatorum deditos et lucem iustitiae fugientes significat” (*De universo*, VIII: *Migne*, PL vol. III, Sp. 247).

61 “Habitat nycticorax in ruinis parietum, quia Christus nasci voluit de populo Judaeorum ... Lucem refugit, quia vanam gloriam detestatur et odit” and “Unde per bubonem intelligere possumus quemlibet peccatorem”; “Ab aliis avibus visus, magnis earum clamoribus proditur, magnis etiam incursionibus vexatur. Si enim peccator ad lucem cognitionis, ubi peccata sua cognoscantur, veniat, magnani bene agentibus derisionem praestat” (*De bestiis et aliis rebus* I, 34 and 44: *Migne*, PL Bd. 177, Sp. 30, 45).

62 Medieval authors already distinguish between the goldfinch and the “acanthis” (“achantis”) finch, “anthus” in Pliny, *Natural History*, X, 42. The “carduelis” goldfinch is referred to in Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum*, V, 12, and Albertus Magnus, *De animalibus libri* XXVI, 26; for the thistle seeds see *ibid.*, 8, XXIII, 41.

63 Freeman Sandler, *The Psalter of Robert de Lisle*, 64.

64 See Brown, *The Holkham Bible*, 44: “just as the eagle flies higher than all other birds.”

In contrast to the depictions of animals (particularly the eagle of St. John), in the scene below, Satan arguing with Christ, is a composite creature. In a later attempt to clarify the sequence of events, the figures in this illumination were given numbers, beginning with St. John and the eagle at the top half of the page. Then, despite being depicting to the right of Satan, it is Christ who speaks first, warning the evil creature carrying three souls in a sack on his back to cease his wicked deeds. Satan replies that Christ should mind his own business (*va't'en a ton ester*); he will continue with his wickedness until a virgin gives birth. In direct response to this provocation, Gabriel continues the sequence with his salutation of Mary, who replies. Even the Holy Spirit is given a number, although he has no speech scroll.

Re-reading the words on the angel's scroll, we can now understand it in a new light. On the one hand it offers us a table of contents (fig. 3.6). At the same time, its juxtaposition of sinning and suffering is in contrast with the cheerful and colorful birds' salvific history of the Tree of Jesse formerly on the opposite page (fig. 3.42). The birds' alignment on the right repeats the thematic presence of sinning and suffering on the angel's board on the left. Isidor only describes the parrot briefly; it is absent from several medieval encyclopedic texts published in the Latin West; but in the bestiary of Pierre de Beauvais, it is described as wise and attentive, sheltering from the rain so that the water cannot harm the colors of its feathers.⁶⁵ But the strongest argument for the connection is the peacock, its flesh deemed non-decayable by Augustine and a symbol of immortality ever since.

While the angelic words balance positive elements on the left and negative experiences and suffering on the right, the animals above the first Tree of Jesse are as ambivalent as the two composite creatures, albeit with a stronger tendency to immortality on the left (peacock and parrot), and suffering and night on the right (owl and finch). The angel's widespread arms recall the crucifixion (illuminated with three full-page miniatures on fols. 32r, 32v, and 33r); and the contrast between believers and doubting sinners repeats the arrangement in a left (positive) and right (negative) side.

From all this we can conclude that the manuscript's Christological parts were planned as a single project, with the frontispiece composed for the New Testament cycle, and both the Old Testament cycle and Apocalypse either initially planned as a separate project or an addition after the frontispiece was completed. Eventually, these projects appear to have been brought together into a single manuscript.

Let us return briefly to the role played by the question of human creativity's origin in the Holkham Bible's frontispiece. It seems to me that the three illustrative

65 Pierre de Beauvais, *Bestiaire*, 175. See also McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, 150f.; Mühlendorf, *Konzepte der "exotischen" Tierwelt*; Ribémont, "Histoires de perroquets," 161f.

techniques we observe there – the use of fine-tint drawing, subtle layers of color washes evoking William of Conches's elements, and lead-point dots – can be perceived by the imaginative eye of the beholder as filling voids with flesh and life. This serves as an artistic commentary on the question of human creativity. In both technique and layout, the illuminator divides the spheres of the visible embodied by the artist at work and the mind's invisible fruits, allegorized by the ape with a mirror, the grotesque figure, and the angel. These figures and entities which minister to the mind's invisible fruits are divided through layers of unmixed pigments. They are infused only with binder and water – which was an ingenious way for the artist to recreate the creation and the ending of the world, resolving the two final spheres.

It is tempting to see the creativity on display in the Holkham Bible as connected to its vernacular text, which may have allowed a certain distance from canonical knowledge while opening it to the ideas and images of encyclopedic texts. This new body of knowledge offered in encyclopedic texts was the foundation for inventing new pictorial formulas and new approaches to depicting acts of creation. And, through the depiction of divine creation, reflection on the work of human artists could be embedded in their own creations. This brought with it great opportunities as it meant that artists had to find new ways of depicting creativity itself, a challenge that required them to reflect on their own work. Within his images of creation, the Holkham Bible illuminator conceptualized his own creative act as the microcosmic equivalent of divine creativity.

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Conclusion

In this book we have discussed previously hidden connections between artistic thinking about God's creative acts and the medieval artists' own acts of creation in depicting Genesis. What in our modern understanding has become a single creative moment was twofold, split between formation and animation. From antiquity onward this double origin sparked a wide range of philosophical and artistic ideas, scholastic thought, and artistic reflections embedded in unique compositions. And, in the aftermath, it laid the foundation not only for a veneration of statues and icons but, indeed, for art history itself, which arises in part from the idea of the animation of a work of art during its perception.¹

By examining the illustrations by Hildebert/Everwinus and those in the Hamburg and Holkham Bibles, we can appreciate the challenge illuminators faced in negotiating pride and humility, and innovation and devotion in illuminating acts of creation. Inspired by new ideas about the world's beginning that originated in the reception of Aristotelian and Islamic cosmology, artists captured an inner dimension of divine creativity while representing God's shaping of the cosmos. Medieval artists began to see their own creativity, akin to divine *ex nihilo* creativity, as analogous to divine creation, not simply their "process of making." In other words, in order to depict creation, you have to be creative yourself so as to impart "creative energy" to the image.

Tracing the origins of these ideas and identifying a closely aligned artistic enterprise leads us to the centers of intellectual exchange in medieval Europe. That exchange ranged from the twelfth to the late fifteenth century, and extended from the Iberian Peninsula and Italy to Paris, and onward to Cologne, Hamburg, and London. The ideas at work here could travel remarkably quickly, so that, in the artistic realm, connections were rendered visual between thoughts, works, and minds otherwise not manifestly linked through explicit evidence from historical records. Starting in the twelfth century, the cathedral schools of Paris and Chartres were major centers of scholastic thought, articulating new ideas and answers to foundational questions in natural philosophy.²

1 Van Eck, *Secret Lives of Artworks*; Pfisterer, "Zeugung der Idee."

2 Jeaneau, *L'âge d'or des écoles de Chartres*; Crouse, "Honorius Augustodunensis."

As we have seen, the conceptual innovations emerging there were not only rooted in older Northern European and French traditions, but also in new ideas articulated by Islamic scholars and the availability of ancient Greek and early Christian texts (the former having been preserved in Arabic translation). Efforts to relate ancient and more recent ideas to Christian faith in turn produced new hypotheses and explanations for the creation and nature of the cosmos. And all of this was reflected in various subtle and explicit ways, in a range of illuminated medieval manuscripts.

Starting in the second half of the twelfth century – particularly the period between 1255 (the Hamburg Bible) and 1327/1235 (the Holkham Bible) – pictures made in (or close to) the centers of scholastic innovation in Spain, France, Italy, Germany, and England revealed close exchanges among artists, natural philosophers, and theologians. In most cases we cannot pinpoint a specific text the artist might have read. But we can situate such images within a realm of cultural ambiance in which scholarly debate was absorbed more widely, and thus an artistic disposition to invent new pictorial modes and images – the results of such stimuli. The unique compositions depicting acts of creation discussed in this book reveal that artists were reacting quite clearly to this new knowledge.

A central question emerging in this context is how creation's double origin in innovative idea and material act of making was addressed thematically by artists and natural philosophers working in medieval Europe during the late Middle Ages, along lines that were separate yet touched upon one another in ways that are difficult to define. Of particular interest here is the manner in which the invention of new formulas for the visual depiction of acts of creation rhetorically frames finished works in terms of the process of making them and in relation to the hands of their maker(s).³ While much recent art-historical attention has focused on the role of medieval images in mediating the ineffable and unseen,⁴ some reorientation toward considering medieval artwork as a product of creative human hands seems called for.

Interest in animation and naturalistic representation was deeply rooted in medieval art and grounded in its discourse around creation. This medieval background to representational artifice is a basis for understanding the relationship between the rise of naturalism and the creation and the development of new images and representational modes. An example here is Francesco da Barberino's allegorical opposition between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans* – a development that

3 Braudel, *La Méditerranée*. Citing that work, John Marino notes that "Braudel used this slow-moving temporal dimension 'to write a new kind of history, total history, written in three different registers, on three different levels, perhaps best described as three different conceptions of time,' in order 'to reconstitute [history] in its rich entirety.'" See Marino, "Braudel's Mediterranean and Italy," 11.

4 For example, Rehm, "Durch Imagination zur Kontemplation"; Hamburger, "Openings."

transformed the medieval concepts of mimesis and *figura* toward the end of the thirteenth century.

We have tracked the idea that the intrinsic relationship between divine creation and human creativity constitutes essential inspiration for the work of medieval artists. In looking carefully at these works, however, and considering their rootedness in opposing concepts, surprising connections are revealed when both origins are carefully traced back and the fruits lying between the two lines are harvested. The artistic works discussed in this book must be analyzed with particular attention to the opposite poles, positions, or ideas articulated in treatises of natural philosophy that influenced them. The primary sources collected here work together to rearrange a constellation of mutual inspiration. Through these choices and juxtapositions, this study criticizes art-historical methods for being based mostly on retrospectively identified lines of development and continuity or, conversely, of rupture and renaissance while neglecting the historical moments that do both – looking back towards a vivid, vibrant past and combining these retrospective moments with the continuities that are intrinsically related to progressive movements.⁵

I therefore agree with Benjamin David's argument that, facing discontinuity as "an essential aspect of the master narrative of periodization in the West ...we might turn to another historical model of the relations of past and present":⁶ a model attentive to historical moments such as the medieval epoch discussed in this book, when, within a field of ambivalent tension with minor or major disagreement, conflicting traditions, and new movements emerging but not yet solidified, there was renewed and intense awareness among both artists and thinkers of one's own relationship to a vivid and vibrant intellectual past. Artists were trying to achieve visually what scholars did in their treatises, namely, harmonize opposing or contradictory ideas. An art-historical focus on works reflecting and playing their role in this historical reality will necessarily correct a history that retrospectively paints a rather blurry picture on top of the conceptual diversity and tension defining, in our context, the act of creation.

5 Significant efforts to understand retrospective moments within periods, for example valuation of the Duecento within the Trecento or of the Trecento within the Quattrocento, are described in Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*; Cole, "Old in New in the Early Trecento"; and David, "Past and Present in Siense Painting."

6 David, "Past and Present in Siense Painting," 100, argues against what Gombrich describes in "The Renaissance Conception of Artistic Progress" (1) as the "Renaissance conception of artistic progress ... familiar to all of us from Vasari's Lives. There we read of the rise of the arts from rude beginnings to their perfection, first in classical antiquity and then once more, after the Gothic disaster, through the three stages of 'good,' 'better' and 'best' to the pinnacle of Michelangelo's art. It is a picture of history that still exerts its spell even though its validity has been questioned for a century and a half." For a critical review of Panofsky's ambivalence in respect of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages in Vasari see Sankovitch, "The Myth."

On the basis of medieval miniatures produced earlier than those we have been considering, Mary Carruthers has demonstrated that “[w]ords and images together are two ‘ways’ of the same mental activity – invention.”⁷ Art historians such as Michael Camille and Jeffrey Hamburger as well as the historian and philologist Charles Burnett, among others, have paid close attention to the role of images and inscriptions in the medieval classroom, in mnemonic activity, and as intellectual stimulation.⁸ But, I would argue, we can move a step further, to focus on the making and composition of images rather than on their reception.⁹ In this respect, one approach – that taken in this book – is to consider artistic creation in the context of the medieval artist’s implicit reflections on creation and creativity. The images always emerge from an intellectual and artistic constellation, a kind of visual reflective container. Entering this constellation, we have the possibility of reconstructing the impact of scholarly debates – of the contemporary philosophical and intellectual climate – on art and artistic processes. Within that broader context, here we have looked at how artistic reflection on creativity was embedded in medieval images – by their maker, the human *artifex*.

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7 Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 142.

8 Camille, “Illuminating Thought”; Burnett, “Give Him the White Cow.”

9 The past decades of groundbreaking scholarship on the mediating qualities of images and their underlying concepts have seen scrutiny of the relationship between the viewer, the mental image, and the actual picture, as well as analysis of vision, perception, illusion, and reception. This approach departs from the structuralist interest in the relationship between maker, image, and beholder to analyze images’ mediating qualities. Hamburger and Bouché, *The Mind’s Eye*; Ganz et al., *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren*; Hamburger, *St. John the Divine*; Nelson, *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*; Camille, *The Gothic Idol*; Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie*; Belting, *Bild und Kult*; Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*; Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*; Kessler and Wolf, *The Holy Face*; Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren*; Wolf, *Schleier und Spiegel*.

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Creation imagery in manuscripts made in the Middle Ages became a locus for visual experimentation as well as the expression of ideas about creativity. By examining representations of divine creation and illustrations of the creation stories in Genesis, this book links medieval ideas about creation, the Divine Creator, and the act of creation with themes in medieval thought about the work of medieval artists.

Case studies from manuscripts illuminating the creation dating from the eleventh to the fourteenth century (Junius 11/The Cædmon Manuscript, Roda Bible & Ripoll Bible, Bible moralisées, Hamburg Bible, Holkhalm Bible) reveal self-reflexive moments, wherein medieval artists relate their own artistic invention to theological debates about creation. This book traces artists' thinking in their own work and then contextualizes those visual cues within the context of philosophical arguments about the creation of the world. It also considers how Western medieval artists, in inventing original illuminations and experimenting with new representational modes, suggest potential analogies between their own work, God's acts of creation, and nature's generative force.

Before joining the University of Bern (Switzerland) in 2017, Beate Fricke was Professor for Medieval Art at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research focuses on the history of cultural heritage, sculpture, image theories, and objects as archives of a history of applied arts, materiality, knowledge transfer and trade in the global "Middle Ages".

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