ISABEL GAMBLE MACCAFFREY

Spenser's Allegory

The Anatomy of Imagination

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. . . . . because the ear repeats,
Without a voice, inventions of farewell.

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Preface

This book is not a comprehensive reading of *The Faerie
Queene*. Such readings are already available, performed
with finesse by critics who have participated in the renais-
sance of Spenserian studies over the past two or three schol-
arly generations. I think of surveys by writers such as A. C.
Hamilton, William Nelson, Maurice Evans, and Kathleen
Williams, as well as readings of individual books of the
poem in works by Harry Berger, Donald Cheney, Angus
Fletcher, Thomas Roche, Humphrey Tonkin, and others.
No one who, at this late date, puts forward yet another
book on Spenser can do so without the awareness of a debt
that must go far beyond footnote documentation. No theo-
retical work could possibly proceed without the strong base
provided by critics and scholars who, with attentive care
and learning, have opened the text of *The Faerie Queene*
to our understanding. We can now say, I think, that some
consensus has been achieved, on fundamentals of the poem
if not on details. We know much of what *The Faerie
Queene* is "about," its richness, complexity, and strangeness;
we know much concerning the formal modes that directed
the poet's proceedings. "We" includes, of course, myself.
From almost all the books on Spenser produced over the
past few decades, as well as more general works in relevant
areas of Renaissance studies, I have derived pleasure and
profit in varying degrees; by many items in the voluminous
journal materials, I have been enlightened. In the following
pages, particular indebtedness has been, as far as possible,
specified. But no honest critic can avoid the disclaimer that
must now be *de rigueur* for all students of the major En-
glish poets: the myriad filiations of one's intellectual life
over the years of composition can no longer be completely
unraveled, and as people of good will in the community of

scholars, we must often be content with general acknowledgment rather than specific documentation.

One of my principal debts cannot, however, go unmentioned. I have found myself continually returning, for refreshment, inspiration, and understanding, to the late Rosemond Tuve's great book, *Allegorical Imagery*. Indeed, my positive intention in the present book could be understood as an exploration of her remark (p. 106) that "allegory does not equate a concretion with an abstraction, but shadows or mirrors essences." Her book is avowedly a prolegomenon to Spenser, the chief member of the "posterity" to whom her "medieval books" point. That she did not live to write on *The Faerie Queene* itself cannot be sufficiently lamented. This book, though it is not the one she would have written, would have been received by her with the generosity she accorded to so many younger scholars, and I would like to regard it as another contribution to the prolific scholarly "posterity" of her spirit.

Readers will find that *The Faerie Queene* looks, in the following pages, something like one of those maps of the United States attributed to New Yorkers or Californians—some parts afflicted with an unnatural gigantism, others perplexingly foreshortened or shrunken. I have chosen illustrative passages with my main theoretical argument in view, and though in Chapters II, III, and IV I have maintained a roughly chronological progress through the poem, many salient episodes, themes, and cantos remain unnoticed. Throughout, I have been principally concerned to show a relationship between the protean formal resources of Spenserian allegory and what is, to my mind, the poet's underlying thematic purpose: to explore the ways of knowing available to human beings "in the middest," and thereby to define more precisely the possibilities of moral action. Among these ways, I have argued, the energizing core is the power that we have learned from Wordsworth to call "Reason in her most exalted mood": the Imagination.

This book has been long in the making, and detailed

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acknowledgment of private indebtedness would amount to an intellectual autobiography, a tedious genre at best. I have learned from my students and colleagues at Bryn Mawr College, Tufts University, and Harvard University more than I can ever fully acknowledge, even to myself. Friends at other institutions, both in conversation and in print, have provided stimulus, contradiction, and inspiration. Ann Berthoff gave the first chapter her searching attention, and its present obscurity is much less deep than it would have been without that enlightening scrutiny. Robert Burlin also read the first chapter, and called my attention to the Blake drawing of Spenser, but those details are neither the beginning nor the end of his contribution to this book. Its deepest roots lie in the years of our acquaintance, and without them it could never have thrived, or even existed.

The book was written largely in a year's leave supported by a grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation—a gift of time that no scholar can ever sufficiently repay. Other kinds of support were provided by my husband, Wallace MacCaffrey, in that year and every other year.

Acton, Massachusetts
July, 1975

Contents

Abbreviations

CQ   *Cambridge Quarterly*
EC   *Essays in Criticism*
EETS   Early English Text Society
ELH   *ELH, A Journal of English Literary History*
ELR   *English Literary Renaissance*
HLQ   *Huntington Library Quarterly*
JEGP   *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
JWCI   *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*
LCL   Loeb Classical Library
MLQ   *Modern Language Quarterly*
MP   *Modern Philology*
PMLA   *Publications of the Modern Language Association*
RES   *Review of English Studies*
SEL   *Studies in English Literature*
SP   *Studies in Philology*
SR   *Studies in the Renaissance*
TSLL   *Tennessee Studies in Language and Literature*
Var.   *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition,*
        ed. Edwin Greenlaw *et al.,* 11 vols. (Baltimore,
        1932-1957)

The following texts are used for writers frequently cited.

The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed.
    (Boston, 1957)
Dante Alighieri, *Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso,* tr. J. A. Carlyle,
    Thomas Okey, and P. H. Wicksteed, The Temple Classics,
    3 vols. (London, 1941, 1946)
The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell, ed. H. M.
    Margoliouth, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1952)
The Student's Milton, ed. F. A. Patterson, rev. ed. (New York,
    1933)
The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. B. Evans *et al.* (Boston, 1974)
Spenser's Faerie Queene, ed. J. C. Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1964)
Spenser's Minor Poems, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1910)

The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt
and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1940-1949)
William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, ed. E. de Selincourt and
Helen Darbishire, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1959)

The archaic u, v, i, and j have been conventionally modernized.

Spenser's Allegory

Imaginatio vero est vis qua percipit homo figuram rei absentis.
Hec habet principium a sensu quia quod imaginamur, imagi-
namur vel ut vidimus vel ad similitudinem alterius rei iam vise
ut ille virgilianus Titirus ad similitudinem sue civitatis Romam
imaginabatur.

> Guillaume de Conches, 12th Century

All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright Sculptures of
Los's Halls & every other Age renews its powers from these Works
With every pathetic story possible to happen from Hate or
Wayward Love & every sorrow & distress is carved here
Every Affinity of Parents Marriages & Friendships are here
In all their various combinations wrought with wondrous Art
All that can happen to Man in his pilgrimage of seventy years.

> Blake, *Jerusalem*, 1804-1810 (?)

Surely . . . we must cry out that imagination is always seeking to
remake the world according to the impulses and the patterns in
that Great Mind, and that Great Memory? . . . What we call
romance, poetry, intellectual beauty, is the only signal that the
supreme Enchanter, or some one in His councils, is speaking of
what has been, and shall be again in the consummation of time?

> Yeats, *Ideas of Good and Evil*, 1901

Introduction

The architect Louis Kahn has described his vocation as the attempt to create "a society of spaces the client never dreamed of."[1] Art not only embodies our dreams, it directs our dreaming; Kahn's realized spaces demonstrate for his clients what they should have dreamed of. If, as Yeats said, art is a vision of reality, it is also a vision of possibility at the point where it intersects actuality. For us, the unrealized is also the unreal, but for the traditional cosmologies and ontologies of western thought, the invisible world that attracts our dreams and our yearning for realization could be more "real" than the visible.

> But what sort of things shall we say subsist? Are they the intelligible or the visible? Certainly they are the intelligible, and this is the judgment of Plato, who puts things visible in the genus of non-being, and puts the intelligible only in the genus of being.[2]

[1] *The New York Times*, October 23, 1972, p. 40.

[2] Tasso, *Discourses on the Heroic Poem*, II.11; *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (Detroit, 1962), p. 477. I shall assume throughout this study the widespread acceptance, by Spenser and most of his lettered contemporaries, of some such "Platonic" metaphysic as Tasso here expresses. At its most general, this means simply a belief in the reality of an invisible realm of being; ontological descriptions of that realm varied widely. I agree with the thesis of Robert Ellrodt in *Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser* (Geneva, 1960), who credits the "persistent strain of Platonic inspiration" running through the poet's works rather to "an older tradition inherited from the Middle Ages" than to the recovered works of Plato himself and his redactors in the *Quattrocento* (p. 11).

A succinct account of the fortunes of the Platonic Idea and its repercussions for the theory of art in the centuries preceding Spenser is given by Erwin Panofsky in the early chapters of *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, tr. J.J.S. Peake (Columbia, S.C., 1968).

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To give body to this invisible realm is the task of po-
etic imagination, in particular of allegory. Shakespeare's
Theseus, at the end of a dream play, speaks of how "imagi-
nation bodies forth / The forms of things unknown" (*MND*
V.i.14-15). Dreams give us access to a normally hidden
realm, and the waking dream of art produced by miracu-
lously blinded bards makes visible the secret powers that
rule our lives. These powers were re-named by Freud:
Eros, Ananke, and their cohorts. Spenser's contemporaries
called them Fate or Providence, or identified them with
constellations in the sky. They included angelic intelli-
gences that moved the planets and mediated between heav-
en and earth; a realm of ideal essences or "ideas"; and the
fathomless regions of the human soul inhabited by a variety
of psychic energies. The mind of man contemplates, con-
tains, and names these forces:

> And thus, from divers accidents and acts
> Which do within her observation fall,
> She goddesses and powers divine abstracts:
> As Nature, Fortune, and the Virtues all.[3]

To these "powers divine" must be added the invisibles of
the temporal dimension: the vanished past and the unpene-
trated future. Past and future are aspects of God's design
and are visible to him, but for human beings they can be
"seen" only with the inward sight of memory or prophecy.
Behind all these unseen realities is the ultimate reality,
dwelling "in that realm of eternal truth from which all
things temporal were made, [which] we behold with our
mind's eye."[4]

The process of imagining alluded to in the preceding
paragraph involves, in fact, several distinct, even mutually
exclusive, operations of the mind; these mental operations

[3] Sir John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum; The Complete Poems*, ed. A. B.
Grosart, Early English Poets Ser. (2 vols., London, 1876), I, 43-44.
[4] St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, vii; *The Later Works*, tr. John Burnaby
(Philadelphia, 1955), p. 65.

have been differently described and evaluated at different stages in the history of ideas. Consideration of them has always been affected by prevailing metaphysical and onto-logical theories, though the relationships between ontology and imagining were not always clearly discerned or spelled out. Before proceeding to the particulars of Spenser's poem, it will be necessary to unravel some complications of the imagination's life with respect to certain philosophical prin-ciples. The speculations which undergird all theories of imagination are introduced above in the reference to dreams, which can be regarded ambivalently—and were so regarded throughout the Middle Ages—depending upon whether they are the products of self-generated illusion, or divinely implanted vision. And the ambiguity of dreams, in turn, is a vividly focused instance of a larger problem, the central issue of epistemology. Does the mind (or the imag-ination) make or merely apprehend what it perceives? Is there, as Tasso insists (following Plato), a realm of "intel-ligible" being more ultimate than that which we project upon the world in our imaginative structures? And, if there is, what is the relation between these structures and that actuality?

When Coleridge, in 1802, proclaimed that "in our life alone does Nature live," he was giving radical expression to the "projectionist" view of the epistemological puzzle.[5] He did not succeed in convincing himself, and a significant part of his intellectual life was devoted to the long wrestle with the subject/object distinction. For Spenser and his contemporaries, the notion that "Nature lives" insofar as we perceive and evaluate it could not have been formulated in

[5] The classic account of this subject for the Romantic period is M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York, 1953), especially Ch. 3. The history of the mind's commerce with the world has been traced by Owen Barfield in *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*. I shall be discussing the phenomenon he calls "original participation": "the sense that there stands behind the phenomena, *and on the other side of them from man*, a represented, which is of the same nature as man" (Harbinger ed. [New York, 1965], p. 111).

the same way. If the eye (including the mind's eye) "makes" the object it perceives, it does so, they would hold, by making sense of it, understanding and locating it. This process can occur because an intelligible "outer" world and a sense-making "inner" world are aspects of a single divinely-designed universe. In the sixteenth century the subject/object, creative/visionary issue, though extremely complex, was not yet insoluble. It had been solved in the great intellectual systems of the high Middle Ages. Allegory considers the life of man as it unfolds within the assumptions provided by these systems; this means that allegorical fictions develop within a "mental space" which is analogically related to the spaces realizing God's "great idea," the macrocosmic spaces of the universe.

"Mental space" is Coleridge's identifying phrase for the locale of *The Faerie Queene*: it is liberated from "all material obstacles"; "it is truly a land of Fairy, that is, of mental space."[6] Speculation about the character of this interior human world, and about its most elusive indwelling power, imagination, has a long history, some high points of which will be indicated in the first chapter, as a prolegomenon to the argument that an allegory—at any rate, Spenser's allegory—is a model of the mind's life in the world. It is a model in Susanne Langer's sense: "A model . . . always illustrates a principle of construction or operation; it is a symbolic projection of its object which . . . must permit one to match the factors of the model with respective factors of the object, according to some convention."[7] In allegory, mind makes a model of itself; more accurately, imagination offers a model of the imagining process. *The Faerie Queene*

[6] *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p. 36.

[7] *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling*, Vol. I (Baltimore, 1966), p. 59. *Model* in this context is distinguished from *image*, "a rendering of the appearance of its object in one perspective out of many possible ones. It sets forth what the object looks or seems like." *The Faerie Queene* is a model that contains images and discloses the principles of their operation.

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mirrors the mind's very structure, as well as its principalities and powers; it is at once a treatise upon, and a dazzling instance of, the central role that imagination plays in human life.

This thesis does not entail, as I hope to demonstrate, neglect of the concerns traditionally attributed to "grave moral Spenser." His allegory records significant points of contact between what we now call "subjective" and "objective" realms, and therefore involves epistemological principles which rapidly become moral principles. What we see is what we think, and what we see and think interact to bring about what we do. The "vertuous and gentle discipline" that Spenser set out to exemplify in his poem is a moral discipline, but it cannot be that without also being an epistemological and imaginative discipline. His schoolmaster, Richard Mulcaster, connected the human "prerogative of understanding beyond sense," which I have identified with imagining, with the proper conduct of "this our mortall life."

> Last of all our soull hath in it an imperiall prerogative
> of understanding beyond sense, of judging by reason,
> of directing by both, for deutie towards God for societie
> towards men, for conquest in affection, for purchace in
> knowledge, and such other things, whereby it furnisheth
> out all maner of uses in this our mortall life, and be-
> wraieth in it self a more excellent being, then to con-
> tinew still in this roming pilgrimage.[8]

"This roming pilgrimage" can yield to an existence in which dreams become truth, and one function of imagination is to give us practice in dreaming such dreams, so that we may be ready for unveiled reality. But if we are to understand high dreams, we must first understand and rehearse the humbler, originating stages in the life of the

[8] *Mulcaster's Elementarie*, ed. E. T. Campagnac (Oxford, 1925), pp. 36-37.

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mind. Another of allegory's tasks is to reproduce what Whitehead, describing the genesis of mental life from the flux of "illimitable" ordinary experience, calls "complete occasions": comprehended experiences, rescued from submergence in the confusion of the quotidian. "Memory, anticipation, imagination, and thought" separate the occasion from its spatio-temporal continuum and envelop it in an illuminating manifold.

> A complete occasion includes that which in cognitive experience takes the form of memory, anticipation, imagination, and thought. These elements in an experient occasion are also modes of inclusion of complex eternal objects in the synthetic prehension, as elements in the emergent value.[9]

To relate such occasions to "complex eternal objects": this is what we mean by knowledge, and upon this mysterious but familiar process, the allegorizing imagination turns its powerful self-regarding gaze. Like the *Commedia*, *Pearl*, and at least one thread of *Piers Plowman*, *The Faerie Queene* is about processes of coming to know. It dramatizes the adventures of the wit of man, through all its many powers, drawing upon a traditional scenario repeatedly rehearsed—for example, in some prolix couplets by Lydgate:

> Wher as man, in sentence,
> By reson hath intelligence,
> To make his wytt to enclyne,
> To knowe thinges that be dyvyne,
> Lastyng and perpetuel,
> Hevenly and espirituel,
> Of heven and of the firmament,
> And of every element,
> Whose wyt ys so clere y-founde,
> So perfyt pleynly and profounde,

---

[9] A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York, 1925), p. 246; Whitehead is discussing the process of abstraction.

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> That he percethe erthe and hevene
> And fer above the sterris sevene,
> So that he hath of every thing
> Verray perfyt knowlechyng
> In his secret ynwarde syghte.[10]

In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser shows us the "secret ynwarde syghte" doing what it does.

It is my conviction that Spenser has a more conscious and systematic notion of imagination's proper function than any we find in most of his contemporaries. He repeatedly insists upon its implications for the theory of knowledge, and loses no opportunity to describe the upward mobility of the imaginative power. Among the dreary iterations of *The Teares of the Muses*, Urania celebrates "the mindes of men borne heavenlie," made capable of understanding what they cannot literally observe by virtue of the human ability to "see" with the inward eye.

> From hence wee mount aloft unto the skie,
> And looke into the Christall firmament,
> There we behold the heavens great *Hierarchie*,
> The Starres pure light, the Spheres swift movement,
> The Spirites and Intelligences fayre,
> And Angels waighting on th'Almighties chayre.
> (505-10)

This book will consider some of the ways in which Spenser's sophisticated conscious and self-conscious allegory deals with epistemological problems, including the capacities and limitations of fictions as vehicles of truth—for example, the fiction of *The Faerie Queene*. The poem looks at itself and offers an eloquent argument for its own existence, commenting in the process upon how metaphors work, what is implied by various metaphorical and iconographical strategies, and how far we may trust the basic medium, language.

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[10] John Lydgate, *Reson and Sensuallyte*, ed. Ernst Seiper, EETS (Ex. Ser.) LXXXIV (London, 1901), pp. 20-21.

It is often said that self-referring fictions are peculiar products of the introspective "modern mind." But modernity and self-consciousness are themselves recurrent historical phenomena. Readers of Dante, of Chaucer, of Spenser, know that imagination's most appropriate personification has always been Narcissus.

PART I

Allegory and Imagination

1. The Universe of Allegory

The power of imagination is described by Michael Drayton at the climax of *Endimion and Phoebe*, that curious amalgam of Ovid and Plato.

> And now to shew her powerfull deitie,
> Her sweet *Endimion* more to beautifie,
> Into his soule the Goddesse doth infuse,
> The fiery nature of a heavenly Muse,
> Which in the spyrit labouring by the mind
> Pertaketh of celestiall things by kind:
> For why the soule being divine alone,
> Exempt from vile and grosse corruption,
> Of heavenly secrets comprehensible,
> Of which the dull flesh is not sensible,
> And by one onely powerfull faculty,
> Yet governeth a multiplicity,
> Being essentiall, uniforme in all;
> Not to be sever'd nor dividuall,
> But in her function holdeth her estate,
> By powers divine in her ingenerate,
> And so by inspiration conceaveth
> What heaven to her by divination breatheth.[1]

Drayton's last couplet neatly acknowledges the subjective origin of conceptualizing, while allowing, in the etymological progress from *inspiration* to *breatheth*, for the dependence of imagining upon divine origins. The historical process that led up to this and similar eulogies of the heavenly Muse in the Renaissance is a lengthy and tangled skein. I propose to unravel only its main thread, as a preface to the argument that the allegorical method and the theory of

[1] *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J. W. Hebel *et al.* (5 vols., Oxford, 1961), I, 142; lines 505-22.

imagination are inseparably related during the centuries which sustained belief in both the objective reality of an invisible realm, and a required relation between that realm and the realities perceived by sense.

"The history of imagination is the account of the process by which rightful recognition was given to that function of the mind in virtue of which we have pictures."[2] The slowness of the process and the tardiness of recognition can be traced to the lowly origin of *phantasia* in the material body of man; it belonged to the sensible soul, the soul which man shares with the brutes. In a dualistic metaphysic like Plato's —a dualism never completely solved by Aristotle, and endemic in western philosophy—imagination inevitably bore an hereditary stigma. A philosopher dedicated to escape from the bonds of materiality must cast a cold eye on *phantasia*, irrevocably shackled to the objects of sense from which its second-class images are derived. In the faculty-psychology of classical philosophy which survived in various versions through the lifetime of Spenser, imagination was a humble mediating power. The younger Pico could declare, as a "proposition which in the eyes of philosophers and theologians is a clear and admitted fact," that

> There exists a power of the soul which conceives and
> fashions likenesses of things, and serves, and ministers
> to, both the discursive reason and the contemplative
> intellect; and to this power has been given the name
> *phantasy* or *imagination*.[3]

Spenser depicts this power as the melancholic man Phantastes, "that mad or foolish seemd," in the third chamber of

[2] Murray W. Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Medieval Thought* (Urbana, 1927), p. 96.

[3] Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *On the Imagination*, tr. Harry Caplan (New Haven, 1930), p. 37. A useful summary of the theory of imagination in relation to the psychology of the late Middle Ages can be found in Morton Bloomfield's discussion of Langland's Imaginatif, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, 1961), Appendix III.

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Alma's turret (II.ix.52). Toiling at its menial, though neces-
sary, tasks, *phantasia* looks uninteresting and harmless
enough. But it has some interesting features, as Aristotle
noted. "For imagining lies within our own power whenever
we wish (e.g. we can call up a picture, as in the practice of
mnemonics by the use of mental images)."[4] Though depen-
dent, ultimately, on sense experience, imagination can func-
tion in the absence of sensation; Aristotle cites the example
of dreams. In this partial independence of the image-mak-
ing power lie the seeds of many future developments.

But this is not the whole story about imagination for clas-
sical philosophy. Both Plato and Aristotle recognized that
the imagining power plays an essential role in even the loft-
iest ranges of human thought, the realm of "the contempla-
tive intellect"; and both, in different ways, made room for
it in their epistemologies. In certain of Plato's late dia-
logues, there is discussion of images as reflections, divinely
implanted in the soul, of the ideal realm.[5] And Aristotle
acknowledged that even the rational soul cannot function,
in man, without imagination. "To the thinking soul images
serve as if they were contents of perception. . . . That is why
the soul never thinks without an image."[6] The notion that
imagination, though in origin a "lower" faculty, is an in-
gredient in man's knowledge even of divine truth, appears
in many medieval descriptions of the rational soul; the ac-
count by Hugh of St. Victor is especially pertinent.

> The third power of the soul appropriates the prior
> nutritional and sense-perceiving powers, using them, so
> to speak, as its domestics and servants. It is rooted en-
> tirely in the reason, and it exercises itself either in the
> most unfaltering grasp of things present, or in the under-
> standing of things absent, or in the investigation of

[4] *De Anima*, III.3 (427b); *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard
McKeon (New York, 1941), p. 587.
[5] See Bundy's discussion of the *Sophist* and *Timaeus*, *Theory of Imag-
ination*, pp. 48-53.
[6] *De Anima*, III.6 (431a); *BW*, p. 594.

things unknown. This power belongs to human-kind
alone. . . . This divine nature is not content with the
knowledge of those things alone which it perceives spread
before its senses, but, in addition, it is able to provide
even for things removed from it names which imagina-
tion has conceived from the sensible world, and it makes
known, by arrangements of words, what it has grasped
by reason of its understanding.[7]

Hugh's classification of invisible realities accessible to the
soul follows a tripartite scheme which corresponds to man's
life in time and space. In the moment, we grasp "things
present"; to the past or regions remote in space belong
"things absent"; to the future, "things unknown." Spenser
provides an expansive version of the last notion in his stanza
on the voyages in the Proem to Book II of *The Faerie
Queene.*

> But let that man with better sence advize,
> That of the world least part to us is red:
> And dayly how through hardy enterprize,
> Many great Regions are discovered,
> Which to late age were never mentioned.
> (II.Pro.2)

The great regions include the new-found lands of the Amer-
icas, but the poet goes on to speculate audaciously of the
"other worlds" in the stars or beyond, which may also be
discovered by imagination.

The relationship, in imagining, between sense experience
and the knowledge of invisible reality is paradoxical and
crucial. It appears to be based upon an analogy between the
soul's humblest function—recording and reproducing sen-
sory images—and its most exalted—intuiting ultimate es-
sences in those realms of deep truth that are imageless
though not inapprehensible. The analogy derives from an

[7] *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the
Arts,* tr. Jerome Taylor (New York, 1961), pp. 49-50.

introspectively derived truth: that knowledge of transcendent reality is "like" knowledge of images in being immediate and non-discursive. Accommodation of epistemology to this fact can be found in Plato's extrapolation of fantasy as "the very faculty which, rightly informed by light from above, results in vision higher than reason can attain,"[8] and in the medieval notion of an *intellectus* superior to *ratio* or discursive reason. To the threefold hierarchy of faculties is added a fourth which transcends them all.

> Sense, imagination, reason and understanding
> [*intelligentia*] do diversely behold a man. For sense
> looketh upon his form as it is placed in matter or
> subject, the imagination discerneth it alone without
> matter, reason passeth beyond this also and considereth
> universally the species or kind which is in particulars.
> The eye of the understanding is higher yet. For sur-
> passing the compass of the whole world it beholdeth
> with the clear eye of the mind that simple form in itself.[9]

Boethius' *intelligentiae oculus* "sees" simple forms; it therefore seems somehow akin to the sub-rational power, imagination, which also "discerns" forms *sine materia*. Poetry, Milton said, is simple, sensuous, and passionate. In that simplicity lies its claim to kinship with the high visionary powers of the transcendent intellect. References to an eye in the mind underline this relationship. "The mind has, as it were, eyes of its own, analogous to the souls' senses. . . . I, Reason, am in minds as the power of looking is in the eyes."[10] From here it seems but a short step, logically if not chronologically, to the notion of "Wit the pupil of the Soul's clear eye,"[11] the erected wit of the *Apologie for Poetry*.

In fact, of course, the concept of imagination as the art-

[8] Bundy, *Theory of Imagination*, p. 53.
[9] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. V, Prosa 4, tr. "I.T.," rev. H. F. Stewart; *Boethius*, LCL (London, 1953), p. 389.
[10] Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I.vi.12; *The Earlier Writings*, tr. J.H.S. Burleigh (Philadelphia, 1953), p. 30.
[11] Davies, *Complete Poems*, I, 75.

ist's special gift was very slow to emerge. The nature of po-
etic fictions was a subject of debate in the twelfth century,
but it was treated in the course of more general discussions
concerning the nature of the symbolic method and the in-
terpretation of Scripture. Wit (*ingenium*) or imagination
was a way of knowing before it was a power of making.

> *Ingenium* . . . is a vital link in human consciousness,
> uniting the highest and the basest capacities of will
> and curiosity. It is closely related to imagination,
> the power of mind by which things absent are
> perceived, and thus to "fantasies" of all sorts, from
> the wildest dream to the highest state of vision.[12]

Nevertheless, although members of the so-called School of
Chartres both analyzed and produced poetic fictions which
embodied visionary truth, imagination as an aesthetic prin-
ciple was regarded even by them as of minor importance,
and as potentially dangerous. Hugh of St. Victor included
among the functions of the soul not only the power to un-
derstand, but the power to record the fruits of understand-
ing by providing *names* "which imagination has conceived,"
but this activity is quite narrowly defined. Later in the
Didascalicon there is a disparaging chapter on "the songs
of the poets" as "mere appendages of the arts," unworthy
of being counted among the true *artes*.[13]

A strong renewal of interest in imagination, as both
a noetic and a creative faculty, accompanied the recovery
of neo-Platonic and "occult" symbolisms in the Renaissance.
These reinforced

> a profound conviction that man, the image of the
> greater world, can grasp, hold, and understand the

[12] Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Cen-
tury* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 94-95.

[13] *Didascalicon*, pp. 87-88. The Chartrians, however, attributed a
higher seriousness to secular literature than that allowed by Hugh; see
Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, pp. 49ff.

18

greater world through the power of his imagination.
We come back here to that basic difference between
Middle Ages and Renaissance, the change in the attitude
to the imagination. From a lower power which may be
used in memory as a concession to weak man who
may use corporeal similitudes because only so he
can retain his spiritual intentions towards the intelli-
gible world, it has become man's highest power, by
means of which he can grasp the intelligible world
beyond appearances through laying hold of significant
images.[14]

The use of imagination to "grasp the intelligible world" is
one side of the picture. The other is confidently asserted by
Tasso, who cites "the Areopagite" to support the highest
possible claim for the poet as a maker of images.

That part of occult theology that is contained in the
signs, and has the power of making one perfect, is
fitting to the indivisible part of our soul, which is
the intellect at its purest. The other, eager for
wisdom, which brings proofs, he attributes to the
divisible part of the soul, much less noble than the
indivisible. Thence it leads to the contemplation of
divine things; and to move readers in this way with
images, as do the mystic theologian and the poet, is
a much more noble work than to teach by means of
demonstrations, which is the function of the
scholastic theologians.[15]

This is a lofty flight indeed; and interest in the creative fac-
ulty was not confined to "mystical theology." Imagination
improves our prospects in this life as well as the next.

Sure He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not

[14] Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Peregrine ed. (London, 1969),
pp. 226-27.
[15] *Discourses*, I.10; Gilbert, p. 476.

19

> That capability and godlike reason
> To fust in us unus'd.
>
> (*Hamlet*, IV.iv.36-39)

These words of Hamlet draw what to us seems a necessary conclusion from the presence in man of discursive reason, his peculiar intellectual faculty: we know in order to use our knowledge. An aspect of "discourse," the ability to look "before and after," alludes to those mnemonic and prophetic powers that also dwell with imagination. The godlike capability of man manifests itself in the making and carrying-out of plans, like Hamlet's plot to kill the king, or the state as a work of art; and also in monuments of unaging intellect which outlast many individual life-spans and enable us to triumph over mortality. Among these monuments are the alternative worlds of art, societies of spaces that remain unrealized until the maker's fiat causes them to become tangible in paint or stone or words.

Sidney's *Apologie for Poetry* is both the culmination of the movements of thought I have been tracing, and a portent of things to come. Sidney speaks of alternative worlds and the power of the poet to create *ex nihilo* in terms that may strike us as very modern. And, in fact, the audacity of such a position was acknowledged and deplored by writers in the following century, who saw that the poetic imagination was to be feared not simply because it dealt with licentious subjects and sensuous images, but because it presumptuously, even blasphemously, preferred its own creations to the divine handiwork.[16] Sidney's saucy comparison could lead to fearfully dangerous consequences. The poet,

> lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth
> grow in effect into another nature, in making things

[16] These attitudes are discussed by Perry Miller in *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, Beacon Press ed. (Boston, 1961), pp. 257-59. Richard Sibbes, for instance, denounced imagination for disparaging "the work of God in the creatures, and everything else, for it shapes things as itself pleaseth" (p. 258).

either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite
anew, forms such as never were in Nature. . . . Her
world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.[17]

"Freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit," he
can escape the limits that constrain ordinary mortals and
enjoy the powers of a god in the little world he has made.
Nevertheless, if we read on, we must agree that Sidney does
not press the implications of this paragraph. The passage
that begins by setting the poet beside God ends with a re-
minder of the Fall.

> Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison
> to balance the highest point of man's wit with the
> efficacy of Nature; but rather give right honour to
> the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made
> man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all
> the works of that second nature: which in nothing he
> showeth so much as in Poetry, when with the force of a
> divine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing
> her doings, with no small argument to the incredulous
> of that first accursed fall of Adam: since our erected wit
> maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected
> will keepeth us from reaching unto it.[18]

Although Sidney celebrates the poet's power to invent, he
makes a crucial connection between invention and the intui-
tion of uninvented reality: "our erected wit maketh us know
what perfection *is*." A perfected but invisible reality exists;
the poet adumbrates it in the "new" forms of his golden
worlds. But these new forms are really reminders of old
forms, since we once lived in an actual golden world.[19] As

17 Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd
(London, 1965), p. 100.

18 Ibid., p. 101.

19 The implications of Sidney's theory of poetic imagination have
recently been analyzed by Michael Murrin in Ch. 7 of *The Veil of
Allegory* (Chicago, 1969). He distinguishes the "oratorical" tradition of
the *Apologie* from the theories of "the allegorists," including Spenser,

Sidney's editors have noted, sixteenth-century poets, like their medieval counterparts, were reluctant to detach the poet's golden worlds from the actuality of the divine Creation or to claim absoluteness for poetic creativity. The notion of making, making-up, or feigning opens a Pandora's box of fraudulent visions—fictions that mislead deliberately or inadvertently, prove deceptive or self-deceiving.[20] To ground poetic fiction in an ideal realm—ordinarily obscured by the waywardness of the infected will and the opaqueness and hostility of the fallen environment—is to insure its validity. In a sense, therefore, all valid art is imitative or visionary, though, as Sidney suggests, the objects of imitation are inaccessible to any but an erected wit. Verisimilitude gives way to the stratagems of a higher mimesis, and to Touchstone's paradox that the truest poetry is the most feigning.

The complexities of relationship between invention and imitation can be endlessly debated. Many readers in the sixteenth century were no doubt satisfied by the cheerful compromise of Puttenham, who concluded that the poet "is both a maker and a counterfaiter: and Poesie an art not only of making, but also of imitation."[21] More interesting questions arise when we consider the kind of commerce that can exist between visible and transcendent reality, and between the material resources available to the artist and the impalpable truth apprehended by imagination. The answers lie in the theory of metaphor. For if it is the case, as I have been arguing, that imagination's task has traditionally been to render visible the realms of being apprehended by the "secret ynwarde syghte," then it is no wonder that allegory,

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but agrees that the two points of view approach each other in the notion that "the poet practised anamnesis; he recalled to man what in fact he had once experienced" (p. 187).

[20] A succinct account of sixteenth-century views concerning the nature of fictive illusion can be found in William Nelson, *Fact or Fiction: The Dilemma of the Renaissance Storyteller* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973).

[21] *The Arte of English Poesie*, I.i; ed. G. D. Willcock and A. Walker (Cambridge, 1936 [1970]), p. 3.

the most important of the metaphorical modes, dominated fiction-making for many centuries.

Poets themselves, of course, have always been interested in these problems and in the kind of claims that can be made for their fictions. The loftiest role in which they have cast themselves has been that of the seer or visionary; for Christian authors, the model is the author of the Apocalypse.

> The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:
> Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.
> (Rev. 1:1-2)

An angel, or a Muse, dictates: "What thou seest, write in a book" (Rev. 1:11). It is this visionary power for which Milton prays in Book III of *Paradise Lost*: that his inward eye may be cleared, that he "may see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight" (III.54-5). The genre of the dream vision enabled medieval poets, when they dared, to imply a similar kind of literalness for their fictions: I saw this. The *Divine Comedy* is the greatest example in European poetry;[22] in English one must look to Blake for a comparable absoluteness in claiming the mantle of the prophetic bard, able to pierce heaven and survey ultimate reality with unmediated vision.

When Richard Blackmur calls allegory "the highest form of the putative imagination," he is connecting it with the power to objectify the realm of possibility. But possibility must be grounded in potential realization; therefore, "suc-

[22] On the "literalness" of Dante's fiction, see the Appendix to Charles Singleton, *Commedia: Elements of Structure* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965). The discussion is extended in Richard H. Green, "Dante's 'Allegory of the Poets' and the Mediaeval Theory of Poetic Fiction," *CL* IX (1957), 118-28; and Singleton, "The Irreducible Dove," Ibid., 129-35.

cessful allegory—*La Vita Nuova* and *Pilgrim's Progress*—requires the preliminary possession of a complete and stable body of belief appropriate to the theme in hand."[23] The same may be said of all symbolic modes; if symbols do not directly mirror "reality," they must at least refer to it obliquely. The "body of belief" which lay behind Spenser's poem and its ancestors assumed an integral relationship among the various modes of being, though that relationship would be differently described, according to the writer's purposes. One version led to visionary and "literal" fictions: the *Commedia* or *Paradise Lost*; another, to allegory itself, further removed in the "putative" realm, and darkly shadowed.

"Symbolism" is a mode of experience; allegory is a mode of thought.[24] Both assume an "objectively" valid relationship between material and transcendent being; for the symbolist, this is grounded in a metaphysic—associated with various versions of neo-Platonism, such as the writings of the pseudo-Dionysius—that looks upon the universe as a "sacred emanation" from the "inaccessible One." Fr. Chenu explains that, for these thinkers, "upwards reference" was built into things, part of their very natures, and to read

[23] *The Lion and the Honeycomb* (New York, 1955), p. 131.

[24] I am deliberately alluding to the formula of C. S. Lewis in *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1936): "Symbolism is a mode of thought, but allegory is a mode of expression" (p. 48). Lewis's distinctions in this famous passage are curiously asymmetrical, and it is odd that, ostensibly sharing the theology and ontology of the great allegorical poets, he should perpetuate an essentially incompatible post-romantic view of the inferiority of allegory. I am assuming that allegory and symbolism are two ways of dealing with the "fact" of a genuine congruence between visible and invisible reality, and that they are not mutually exclusive. A "symbolic" situation can be allegorized, and an allegory can eventuate in symbolic vision; both these processes can be seen in *The Faerie Queene*. I concur with Angus Fletcher, however, in thinking the allegory/symbol issue an "unhappy controversy" (*Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* [Ithaca, 1964], p. 13). Fletcher's dissection of it in his Introduction is helpful; his subtitle suggests a single source for these "two" modes.

symbols was to unfold a meaning that God had written into the world.

> This *anagoge*, this upwards reference of things, was constituted precisely by their natural dynamism as symbols. The image of the transcendent was not some pleasant addition to their natures; rather, rooted in the "dissimilar similitudes" of the hierarchical ladder, it was their very reality and reason for being. The symbol was the means by which one could approach mystery; it was homogeneous with mystery and not a simple epistemological sign more or less conventional in character.[25]

Coleridge's famous definition of symbolism gives a modern version of this principle: a symbol "is always itself a part of that, of the whole of which it is representative." The relation is metonymic, not metaphorical; indeed, Coleridge's example is one of the schoolbook instances of metonymy: " 'Here comes a sail',— (that is a ship) is a symbolic expression."[26] Such symbols can and do exist in "real life," and everyone has experienced intensifications of significance which seem to be focused in some natural object or phenomenon. Metaphors, on the other hand, are never found in nature; they are logical contrivances of the imagination, forced to provide substitutes for rare direct experience of

[25] M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, tr. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago, 1968), p. 123.

[26] *Miscellaneous Criticism*, p. 29. The metaphor/metonymy distinction has been studied by Roman Jakobson in his work on aphasia, most accessibly in "The Cardinal Dichotomy in Language," *Language: An Enquiry into Its Meaning and Function*, ed. R. N. Anshen (New York, 1957). Metaphor is based on similarity, metonymy on contiguity. Jakobson remarks that "The primacy of the metaphorical way in the literary schools of romanticism and symbolism has been generally acknowledged, but it is still insufficiently realized that it is the predominance of metonymy which underlies and actually predetermines the so-called 'realistic' trend" (p. 171). This principle would account for the fact that the dominance of "realistic" modes produces an enthusiasm for symbolism and an undervaluation of allegory.

unsensed reality. And metaphorical fictions, including the major kind, allegory, are based upon a view of reality offered by Milton's Raphael; earth and heaven are "each to other like," but not identifiable. Milton does not allow the archangel to claim for his retrospective narrative the truth of ultimate vision appropriated by the blind bard; he adopts the more modest method of analogy:

> what surmounts the reach
> Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
> By lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms,
> As may express them best, though what if Earth
> Be but the shadow of heav'n, and things therein
> Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?
> (V.571-76)

Raphael's rhetorical question both defines and solves the problem of fiction as a mode of truth-telling. If we can assume that the phrase, "earth the shadow of heaven," points to genuine ontological fact, then the maker's corporal forms assume a reliability superior to any that inventiveness alone can claim. "Likeness" legitimates fictions; but we are to remember that a metaphorical gap always exists. So Aquinas:

> From material things we can rise to some sort of
> knowledge of immaterial things, but not to a perfect
> knowledge; for there is no proper and adequate
> proportion between material and immaterial things,
> and the likenesses drawn from material things for
> the understanding of immaterial things are very
> unlike them.[27]

These distinctions have been helpfully unraveled by Winthrop Wetherbee in his study of twelfth-century allegory; his discussion of "rationalist" and "symbolic" modes is relevant to later literary developments as well.

[27] *Summa Theologica*, Bk. I, Q. 88, Art. ii; *Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. A. C. Pegis (2 vols., New York, 1945), I, 848.

Metaphor was a fundamental tool of those rationalist
philosophers who sought knowledge of God from the
study of the structure of the universe and the complex
laws, causes, and analogies by which it is linked with
the human mind. Symbolism, on the other hand, lent
itself to an "anagogical," an open-ended, and ultimately
mystical view, closely related to the traditions of biblical
exegesis, but tending increasingly to embrace the natural
world as well, under the influence of a renewed interest
in the cosmic sacramentalism of the pseudo-Dionysius
and John Scotus Eriugena. In this view *naturalia* were
of value to the extent that they could be seen as directly
reflective of God.[28]

Both metaphor and symbol are grounded in a relationship
of intelligibility between seen and unseen worlds. Metaphor
expresses the relation in the form of an analogy, which,
though God and the angels may perceive it intuitively, can
only be *expressed* for man through a conscious rational
process.

As the quotation from Aquinas indicates, analogical rela-
tionships must take account of distinction as well as like-
ness, or at any rate must not conceal them. There must al-
ways be two or more terms in an analogy, and from this fact
many misunderstandings about allegory have arisen. When
Empson writes that "part of the function of allegory is to
make you feel that two levels of being correspond to each
other in detail, and indeed that there is some underlying
reality, something in the nature of things, which makes this
happen,"[29] he is describing accurately the analogical rela-
tion. But, although phrases like "two levels of being" are
almost inevitable in discussions of allegory, the problem of
how to describe the relation between them continues
to plague literary theory. It is probably best solved *ad hoc*
in the process of concrete analysis, but a few negative re-
marks need to be made here. There is something wrong

[28] *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 17.
[29] *The Structure of Complex Words* (London, 1951), p. 346.

with sentences like this one by Graham Hough: "Allegory
. . . abstracts certain qualities from experience, and then
looks for sensible images . . . to bring them vividly to the
mind of the reader." Hough sees one of the objections him-
self: "What principle have we for deciding whether the
image or the concept came first?"[30] Precisely. Terms like
"came first" are both presumptuous and meaningless. They
imply temporal priority, and any formula that assumes such
priority presumes an access to the creator's imagination for
which there is no warrant. But the nature of the relation-
ship between "image" and "idea" is also misconceived. The
notion that the writer moves from "experience" to "abstrac-
tion" and then back to the "sensible" realm is untrue not
only to the imaginative process, but also to the universe
which allegory reflects. There is an inauthentic arbitrari-
ness about this picture of the poet casting about for some
sort of "sensible image" in which to clothe his abstractions,
for "ideas" and visible objects all belong to the same uni-
verse and are elements in the providential scheme of Crea-
tion. A cosmic poem like *The Faerie Queen* or *Piers Plow-
man*—and lesser allegories to a lesser degree—depicts this
intelligible world as it looks to the eye of the mind. The
crooked is made straight, the rough places plain; or rather,
the crookedness, roughness, and obscurity of the ordinary
fallen world are reproduced in a context where nothing is
without meaning, and there is access to that meaning.
Everything is "visible," and when everything becomes ac-
cessible to sense, we can see that the relationships between
aspects of reality are not arbitrary. This is not to say that
the poets employ a conventional vocabulary of symbols
with fixed and invariable significances; it is to say that sig-

[30] *A Preface to "The Faerie Queene"* (London, 1962), pp. 102-103.
Some of these matters are discussed by Morton Bloomfield in "A Gram-
matical Approach to Personification Allegory," *Essays and Explorations*
(Cambridge, Mass., 1970). He observes that priority in the poet's mind
"is extremely difficult to determine exactly, and his mental procedures
could be the same in both personification allegory and symbolism"
(p. 256).

nificances and their embodiments are rationalized and justified within an ontological system where different grades of reality are continuous and congruent at different points on the scale; to the imaginative eye of the allegorist, all become part of an apprehensible "nature." "The writer of an *allegoria* breaks down his figure for me into that which my senses can apprehend."[31]

Description of the metaphorical situation in allegory can be amended by shifting the notion of priority from temporal to logical. Neither the poet nor the reader "starts from" one realm of being and moves on to another. Rather, we are made aware of a relation of dependence between what we see directly and what we "see" only indirectly through the metaphor. Logical priority in a loose sense can be understood to involve a primary claim on our attention. In a stricter sense, logical priority is causative, as Aristotle explains.

> In those things, the being of each of which implies
> that of the other, that which is in any way the cause
> may reasonably be said to be by nature "prior" to
> the effect. . . . The fact of the being of a man carries
> with it the truth of the proposition that he is, and the
> implication is reciprocal. . . . The true proposition,
> however, is in no way the cause of the being of the man,
> but the fact of the man's being does seem somehow to be
> the cause of the truth of the proposition, for the truth
> or falsity of the proposition depends on the fact of the
> man's being or not being.[32]

"Cause" in this context implies entailment or dependency, and this is precisely what is implied by the "meaning" of an allegory with respect to its *visibilia*. The existence of the material or visible (sometimes called literal) aspect of an allegorical fiction is entailed by the existence of its non-visi-

[31] Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago, 1947), p. 107.
[32] *Categoriae*, xii (14b); *BW*, p. 35.

ble meaning. To put the matter in this way is, in some degree, to insure against forcing a resolutely non-allegorical fiction into a mode alien to the assumptions its form presupposes. It also absolves us from trespass upon the writer's creative process. And, finally, it does least violence to the intimacy of the relation among the different so-called levels of the meaning, which are in fact stages on an ontological continuum.

The usefulness of conceiving of allegorical relationships as logical rather than chronological can be confirmed by recalling Coleridge's formulation of "the law of the dependence of the particular on the universal, the first being the organ of the second, as the lungs in relation to the atmosphere, the eye to light."[33] To conceive of particulars as "organs" whereby universals are apprehended, dependent but accessible avenues of approach to the ultimate immanifest, permits us to speak of allegory's fictive particularities more accurately than a vocabulary of "levels" will allow. The existence of a particular—within an appropriate metaphysical system—assumes the existence of a universal. This is the model for logical subordination. So, for instance, the existence of a word assumes some sort of referent for it. The relation between language and the "language" of allegorical metaphor has been pointed out by Owen Barfield.

> When we use language metaphorically, we bring it
> about of our own free will that an appearance means
> something other than itself, and, usually, that a manifest
> "means" an unmanifest. . . . We use the phenomenon as
> a "name" for what is not phenomenal.[34]

It is interesting to recall Hugh of St. Victor's comment that imagination "is able to provide even for things removed from it *names* which imagination has conceived from the

[33] *The Statesman's Manual*, Appendix B; *The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. W.G.T. Shedd (7 vols., New York, 1884), I, 462 n.

[34] *Saving the Appearances*, p. 126.

sensible world." To conceive of metaphor as an allegorical "language" is helpful because it includes *both* the idea of separateness between word and referent *and* the notion of the referent's inaccessibility without the word. Words, and allegorical images that are like words, are the body of thought and as such they are, of course, indispensable, since disembodied reality is not for us. "The soul never thinks without an image."

Imagination is the generator of images, and allegory gives us insight into the life-processes of those images. But, as this capsule history has, I hope, suggested, imagination must not therefore be considered an insignificant "aesthetic" faculty on the fringes of consciousness. It lies at the center of human understanding and, as Mulcaster said, "furnisheth out all manner of uses in this our mortall life." These uses may be moral; they may be literary; they may be practical or scientific. Jacques Monod has recently reiterated the importance of imaginative experience for the scientist.

> Tous les hommes de science ont dû, je pense, prendre conscience de ce que leur réflexion, au niveau profond, n'est pas verbale: c'est une *expérience imaginaire*, simulée à l'aide de formes, de forces, d'interactions qui ne composent qu'à peine une "image" au sens visuel du terme. . . . Je ne crois pas en effet qu'il faille considérer les images non visuelle sur lesquelles opère la simulation comme des symboles, mais plutôt, si j'ose ainsi dire, comme la réalité subjective et abstraite, directement offerte à l'expérience imaginaire.[35]

[35] "I am sure every scientist must have noticed how his mental reflection, at the deeper level, is not verbal: to be absorbed in thought is to be embarked upon an *imagined experience*, an experience simulated with the aid of forms, of forces, of interactions which together only barely compose an 'image' in the visual sense of the term. . . . Indeed, the nonvisual images with which simulation works would be more rightly regarded not as symbols but, if I may so phrase it, as the subjective and abstract 'reality' offered directly to imaginative experience." (Translation by Austryn Wainhouse, from Knopf edition of Monod, *Chance and Necessity*). *Le hasard et la necessité* (Paris, 1970), p. 170. Monod's chapter can be regarded as an updating of Henri Bergson's

These remarks are valuable in reminding us that imagination, even in poetry, is not exclusively an affair of visible "images," though it may employ them in expressing its insights. It concerns, in fact, "la réalité subjective" in all its ramifications. And subjective reality is characterized, above all, by its lust for unexperienced perfections, a lust satisfied by the creation of artificial paradises, societies of perfect spaces, models and theorems of total visibility and intelligibility. *The Faerie Queene*, too, is a world of possibility, where the eternal invisible powers take on flesh, and the gardens and groves they inhabit draw closer. At the same time, it is the world of each of us, in which we hope to have our happiness. The mind turns inward in order that it may return with a more powerful sense of identity and purpose to its own experience in a bewildering universe, which may yet be remade in the image of the heart's desire. Like Wordsworth, Spenser was interested in imagination as the maker of poetic worlds; also like Wordsworth, he deals at a deep level with the universal human power of imagining. His poem accomplishes for his age the goal Wordworth set before himself: to

> describe the Mind and Man
> Contemplating; and who, and what he was—
> The transitory Being that beheld
> The Vision.
>
> *(PW* V.6)

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classic account of the *fonction fabulatrice* in *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris, 1933), an effort to rationalize the persistence of imagination in terms of evolutionary theory.

2. The Fallen World: Analytical Allegory

> Unutterable providence . . . has set two ends before
> man to be contemplated by him; the blessedness, to wit,
> of this life, which consists in the exercise of his proper
> power and is figured by the terrestrial paradise, and the
> blessedness of eternal life, which consists in the fruition
> of the divine aspect, to which his proper power may not
> ascend unless assisted by the divine light.[1]

The first of these two ends is the one that Spenser sets
before himself in his great poem. *The Faerie Queene* un-
folds "in the middest"; to follow it to its end requires pa-
tience of both poet and reader. For a human being vacillat-
ing between erected wit and infected will, awareness of the
gap between *might be* and *is* may lead to an effort to escape
altogether from his lamentable condition but, as Spenser
was to show repeatedly, premature simplifications lead to
dead ends. We must find the blessedness of this life—
understanding—before we ascend higher. The Red Cross
Knight is assured by the old man Contemplation that his
"painefull pilgrimage" will end, that there "is for thee
ordaind a blessed end" (I.x.61). Nevertheless, though cos-
mic and apocalyptic intimations are always relevant to the
action of *The Faerie Queene*, its main locale is the "thurgh-
fare ful of woe" that is life itself. A consciousness of where
and how we live as fallen human beings governs the nature
of Spenser's rhetorical mode, allegory, and directs his con-
duct of it in the poem.

We come to diverse ends, Dante said, by diverse means.
The way to the terrestrial paradise is "by the teachings of
philosophy, following them by acting in accordance with

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[1] Dante, *De Monarchia*, III.xvi; *The Latin Works*, tr. P. H. Wick-
steed, The Temple Classics (London, 1904), p. 277.