

# Hidden Truth brought forth by Time



A description of some of the profound truths portrayed by and hidden in the emblem on the first edition title page of Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*.

Author: Peter Dawkins



Woodblock emblem on the title-page of Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, bound and published together with *Sylva Sylvarum*, 1st edition 1626 and 2nd edition 1627, printed in London by J. Haviland for W. Lee.

Modern colour rendition of same.

The emblem on the title page of the first edition (1627) of Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* depicts Time in the form of Pan drawing forth Truth in the form of a naked but crowned woman from a cave. Time holds a scythe in his right hand, whilst he grasps Truth's left wrist with his left hand. At his feet and standing upright between them is an hourglass. A rose is at the 6 o'clock position, beneath Time's left foot and above the "RS" signature, which itself suggests a rose by means of its intertwining letters. The Latin motto in the circular border reads "Tempore Patet Occulta Veritas", which translates as "[The] Hidden Truth brought forth by Time".<sup>1</sup>

## Foundation Stone and Zodiac

The illustration is constructed on a hidden geometric template comprising, basically, a square and circle, with the circle inscribed within the square. This is a geometric portrayal of squaring the circle—one of several ways of doing so—that represents the marriage of heaven (the circle) and earth (the square). "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." (Genesis 1:1.) This is symbolic of what is known as The Foundation Stone in sacred tradition, the forming of which is accomplished by the cubing of a sphere (i.e. squaring the circle in three dimensions). In the Foundation Stone is contained all wisdom, symbolised in the Hebraic tradition by the Tree of Life—a numerical and geometric presentation of Truth that is present within the structure of the Foundation Stone.

The circle is in fact a double circle, formed by two concentric circles creating a circular band. Following indications given by the figure of Time, the inner circle can be seen to be divided into 12 equal segments, producing the 12 time periods of a 12-hour clock or 12-sign Zodiac. ('Zodiac' is derived from the Greek word *zōidiakòs* meaning 'circle'.) The long straight shaft of Time's scythe marks one complete diameter of the circle, whilst the upper part of his left arm indicates another diameter which, continued down, meets the circumference of the circle by the toe of Time's left foot (hoof). Extended upwards it meets the circumference at the highest point of Time's angelic wings. These two diameters of the circle produce two equal segments, each of which is 1/12 of the circle. From this, the other four diameters can be inferred and drawn, dividing the circle into 12 equal segments. Because of the way the segments are orientated, the Zodiac would seem to be implied rather than the 12-hour clock. Such a supposition is supported by the circular band in which is inscribed the motto, which suggests the zodiacal band of the ecliptic in which the sun and planets move around the Occult Pole.



Constructing a picture upon a geometric framework was common practice amongst Renaissance artists. The philosophical idea behind this is that the geometry represents the laws of the universe—the Word or Wisdom of God—upon which the forms of Nature are based and from which and around which they grow. The hidden geometry, concealed behind the imagery of the picture, thus represents the hidden truth, known in Freemasonry as the Lost Word—the truth that we are intended to discover and get to understand and know.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the outer form conceals the inner form. All nature is based on mathematical laws, numerical and geometric, including the human form. In addition, besides a physical body which masks a personality, the human being's personality masks his or her true soul or spirit. Even the word *personality* explains this, for it is derived from Latin *persona* meaning 'role' (as in acting) and Greek *prosopa* meaning 'face' or 'mask'. The rest of nature has its own correspondence. For this reason the Buddhist tradition, for instance, refers to both the physical and psychological worlds as an illusion—an illusion that masks a reality, which reality is truth.

In addition the Renaissance artists often showed the geometry as a visible framework, upon which nature winds its way as it grows. The geometric framework represents the fixed or eternal nature of the divine law or will of God; the serpentine nature signifies the freedom of free will allowed to nature and mankind concerning its own choice in how it grows and evolves. The moral is that nature cannot do without the framework of divine laws upon which it depends—laws that support its growth and guide its movement and evolution—laws in fact which bring about its cyclical birth and death, which is also what this emblem suggests. But the free-will that nature and mankind is allowed enables the framework of wisdom to be beautified. Such a beautified framework can be seen surrounding the picture of Time bringing forth the hidden Truth.

By basing the visible naturalistic form of the picture on the hidden pattern of the zodiac, as well as on that of squaring the circle, heaven (the hidden geometry) and earth (the outer natural form) are symbolically married, thereby expressing the Hermetic teaching: -

It is most true, it is without error, it is the sum of verity: That which is beneath is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below, for the performance of the wonders of one thing. As all things were created from the Mind of One, so all things arose by modification of this One Thing. It is so with our Substance. Its father is the Sun, its mother the Moon. The Wind bore it in its belly. The Earth is its nurse. The father of all, the Thelema of the whole world, is here. Its strength is undiminished if it is changed into earth. Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, gently, but with great skill. It rises from earth to heaven, and again descends to the earth, and receives the strength of things above and of things below. Thus you have the glory of the whole world, and all darkness will flee away from you. This is the strength of every strong thing; it overcomes every subtle thing and penetrates all solids. In this way was the world created. These are the wonderful modifications, the manner of which I have described. Hence I am called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three parts of the wisdom of the whole world. I have now said all I have to say concerning the operation of the Sun.

Hermes Trismegistus, *The Emerald Tablet*.

## Alpha-Omega

Following the clues and looking deeper at the picture, it is clear that the prominent shaft of Time's scythe delineates the primary axis of the Zodiac, which divides the Zodiac into two halves, with Time associated with one half and Truth with the other half. This is a succinct but subtle way of portraying the mystery of the Alpha-Omega, for Time signifies the Alpha, the Wisdom or Creator that is both Hierophant and Initiator, who brings forth Truth, the Omega that is the Understanding, Knowledge and Revelation. Hence we have in this emblem picture the idea of the Alpha-Omega as mentioned in the Holy Bible's *Book of Revelation*: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8.)

The Ancient Egyptians referred to the Alpha-Omega as the Double Truth. Francis Bacon refers to the two truths as "the truth of being" and "the truth of knowing". He further explains them by referring to the Alpha, the Creator, as Wisdom, and to that which is revealed, the Omega, as Knowledge. The former is the Spirit, the hidden or unmanifest

truth; the latter is the fully illumined mind or soul, the manifested truth, the bride of the Spirit. Because God is identified as Love, these two are also known as lover and beloved. The wisdom and the knowledge of wisdom are expressions of love.

My praise shall be dedicated to the mind itself. The mind is the man and the knowledge is the mind. A man is but what he knoweth. The mind itself is but an accident to knowledge; for knowledge is a double of that which is. The truth of being and the truth of knowing is all one.

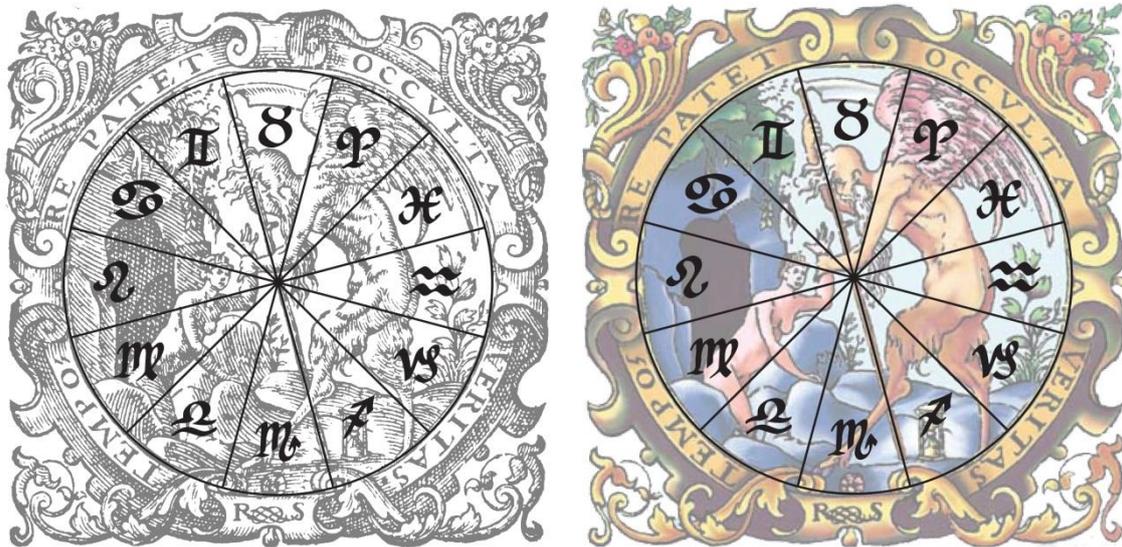
Francis Bacon, *In Praise of Knowledge* (1592).

First therefore let us seek the dignity of knowledge in the archetype or first platform, which is in the attributes and acts of God, as far as they are revealed to man and may be observed with sobriety; wherein we may not seek it by the name of Learning; for all Learning is Knowledge acquired, and all Knowledge in God is original: and therefore we must look for it by another name, that of Wisdom or Sapience, as the Scriptures call it.

Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Bk I (1605).

The Alpha-Omega Double Truth is also represented by the Double-A (AA) as displayed in emblematic headpieces that adorn the Bacon and Shakespeare works and other Rosicrucian publications. The *New Atlantis* "Hidden Truth brought forth by Time" emblem is another way of presenting and explaining the same mystery. It also shows that Time is equated with the holy Wisdom or Word of God, and that Time is Pan.

### Zodiacal Signs and Royal Arch



The primary axis of the Zodiac is the diameter of the Zodiac drawn between the ecliptic cusp of Gemini-Taurus (the 'finger' of Orion) and that of Sagittarius-Scorpio (the Galactic centre). Because in this picture the primary axis is delineated by the shaft of Pan's scythe, the zodiacal signs would then seem to be disposed so that the head and neck of Pan lies in Taurus, the 'Alpha' sign of the Creator who creates by sounding the Word. (In the human body, Taurus rules the throat, mouth and tongue, whereby the Word is sounded. The letter 'A' and the astrological sigil for Taurus are both derived from the shape of the bull's head.)

The feminine body of Truth lies in Virgo, symbolic of the human soul, whilst her head projects into Leo, thereby emphasising her heart-imbued consciousness and crown of illumination. Taurus is the keystone of the Royal Arch<sup>3</sup>; Scorpio is the threshold. The one creates; the other procreates. The one contains the cross of light; the other the serpentine rose of beauty. It is a Rosicrucian mystery, suitably signed.

### The Sphinx and Cupid's Bow

In occupying the two signs of Leo and Virgo in this way, the picture shows how Truth is related to the mystery of the Sphinx. The Sphinx is a symbolic creature having the head of a woman and body of a lion. To relate the figure of Truth in this picture to the zodiacal signs in such a way as to suit this symbolism would mean flipping the signs about the Sphinx Line (the axis drawn through the cusp of Leo and Virgo), but this would not agree with Taurus being the keystone and Scorpio the threshold of the Royal Arch. The secret is that, to be illumined, the love-light of the heart has to be raised to the head, thereby illumining our thinking and shining out from the head as a corona or crown of light. This is known as "the countenance of the Lord".<sup>4</sup> Thus in this picture Virgo represents the body or womb of the human soul, and Leo the heart-light that illuminates her head. As for Time, he is depicted in such a way as to approximate to the celestial bow of the Milky Way. The Sphinx Line signifies the arrow of love-light that is shot from this Cupid's bow.

### The Musical Scale

There is also another division implied by the diagram, wherein Time can be seen to occupy seven signs and Truth five signs of the Zodiac. This is associated with the 12-tone chromatic musical scale that consists of seven natural and five accidental notes. The implication is that Time is associated with the seven natural notes, which are fixed and certain, whilst Truth is associated with the five accidental notes, each of which can be a sharp or a flat. In this the idea of human freewill having a choice of which 'note' to sound (e.g. for better or worse, good or evil) is presented, as well as the opportunity and challenge of adding interest to and creating a harmony with the natural notes of Time when the music of life is played.

### Truth

Truth is traditionally depicted as a naked woman, crowned. She is the personification of the illumined human mind or soul. Soul and mind were equated in Bacon's day. Moreover, the word *man* means 'mind', the thinker. The true soul is the fully illumined mind, set on fire with love such that it shines like the Sun (the astrological ruler of Leo). She is also Virgo, the virgin or pure one—pure in desire, thought and deed. The crown that Truth wears symbolises her illumination. She is the beloved, the bride of the Lord.

In the cave the soul is in the dark and knows nothing. Her virtue is hidden. Time draws her out into the light of day where she shines, illumined from within and without by the divine wisdom which she now understands and knows. Since true knowledge is based on experience, and as the divine wisdom or Word of God is love, so the knower is the embodiment and practitioner of this love. Truth and Philanthropy are the same thing.

I take goodness in this sense, the affecting of the weal of men, which is that the Grecians call Philanthropia; and the word humanity (as it is used) is a little too light to express it. Goodness I call the habit, and Goodness of Nature the inclination. This of all virtues and dignities of the mind is the greatest; being the

character of the Deity: and without it man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing; no better than a kind of vermin. Goodness answers to the theological virtue Charity, and admits no excess, but error. The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall; but in charity there is no excess; neither can angel or man come in danger by it.

Francis Bacon, *Essay 'Of Goodness and the Goodness of Nature'*.

The drawing forth from the darkness of the cave into the universal light of day signifies the journey of the human soul on its path of experience. This is still acted out symbolically in Mystery schools such as Freemasonry, wherein the candidate begins in darkness, being blindfolded and prepared in an anteroom, and is then led into the lodge to be initiated into the practice of charity, where he/she asks for light and the blindfold is removed upon taking the oath. Subsequent degrees of initiation increase the light.

Truth is depicted with her right arm slightly bent or curved, her hand resting on a rock. Her left arm, by contrast, is bent in an 'L' shape, her wrist grasped by the left hand of Time. In this way Truth's right arm suggests the Compass and the left arm suggests the Square, key symbols of Freemasonry. By means of these two, a square and circle can be drawn, and when done in perfect equality, balance, harmony and meaningfulness the circle is squared.

The Compass is symbolic of the conceptual faculty of the mind, and of wisdom, discernment, compassion, friendship and the spiritual nature. The Square is symbolic of the rational faculty of the mind, and of understanding, judgement, strength, virtue, discipline and the material nature. They relate respectively to the right and left-hand pillars of Solomon's Temple and of the Tree of Life. The Square, the Compass and the Holy Book are the Three Great Lights of Freemasonry. This picture of Truth shows how it is Truth herself that is the Holy Book, synonymous with the Foundation Stone, the nature of which she is the revelation.

Truth and her cave occupy exactly five of the twelve segments of the zodiacal clock. The number 5 is equated with the symbolism of the rose, an emblem of the human soul. Its geometric counterpart is the pentalpha, the five-pointed star, itself based upon the pentagram whose geometry contains the Golden Proportion of perfect harmony. In the Christian and Rosicrucian traditions Venus, the Morning Star, represents Truth, so in this sense the naked woman, Truth, is Venus. One of the essential initiations of Christian Rosy Cross is to discover Venus naked in her bedchamber (i.e. the cave of the heart) and, as in the fairy-tale of Sleeping Beauty, wake her with a kiss.

## Time

Time is classically depicted as Saturn (Greek, Kronos), the Lord of Time and Space. He is also equated with Pan and therefore shares the same symbolism. The word *Pan* means 'Universal', 'the All'. In his *Wisdom of the Ancients* Bacon describes Pan as "an elaborate description of universal nature", who is from the spiritual point of view the son of Mercury,<sup>5</sup> the Word of God, and from the material point of view the offspring of Chaos ("the seeds of things mixed and confused together"). This is a classical depiction of the spirit of *man* (male and female), born of the Word of God and matter. His body is represented as biform, the lower half being that of a goat and the upper half being that of a human, with long beard and hair, and with wings. The purpose of this symbolism is to denote the idea of the

evolution of mankind from brute to human to angel, as also the idea that each person incorporates a natural, a human and an angelic or spiritual nature. It is the divine Archetype of the human being.

It is Pan, the spirit of the universe, the spirit of nature, the spirit of each of us, therefore, that gradually draws truth out from its dark and hidden place, the cave of our heart. Pan, or Time, is both Hierophant (Teacher) and Initiator (Tester). We hear him inwardly via the two voices of the intuition—one which teaches and the other which tests. By undergoing death and rebirth countless times (psychological as well as physical), represented by the clock face and the two (or three) hands which go round and round, we gradually gain sufficient experience to discover, understand and know the truth. From darkness to light, such truth becomes “a naked and open daylight”.

Truth is a naked and open daylight... Truth which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the enquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it, and the belief of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature.

Francis Bacon, *Essay Of Truth*.

In this emblem Time occupies exactly seven of the twelve segments of the zodiacal clock. The number 7 is associated with the seven natural musical notes which Pan plays upon his pipes, as well as the seven colours of the spectrum, the seven days of the week and the Seven Days of Creation (Six Days' Work and Seventh Day of Rest). It also denotes the seven main stages or degrees of initiation required to reach full illumination, and the seven ages of man stretching from childhood to old age—the infant, schoolboy, lover, soldier, justice, pantaloon and second childishness of Jaques' vision in *As You Like It*.

## Pan and Echo

Time, herein depicted as Pan, draws forth Truth. In terms of the classical myth concerning Pan, Truth's name is Echo, Pan's beloved. Whereas Pan represents the creative sound or voice of the universe (i.e. the Word), Echo is that same sound reflected back to Pan, but with a difference. The numbers 7 and 5 symbolise this difference. For instance, as already mentioned, there are seven natural or perfect notes in a chromatic musical scale, and five accidental or imperfect notes. For this reason Pan is traditionally shown with panpipes consisting of seven cane pipes or hollow reeds of different lengths tied in a row, which produce (and therefore represent) the seven natural notes of a scale when breathed upon—i.e. the holy breath of Pan produces the seven notes of creation. Their echo or reflection returns as the five accidental or imperfect notes. The accidental notes are imperfect because they are each slightly 'off' the natural note, being the natural note either sharpened or flattened (i.e. a sharp or a flat). That is to say, Echo is the same as Pan, the pure sound, but with an 'accidental' difference. The two make the whole, which unity is represented by the number 12 and the circle—hence the 12 signs of the Zodiac or Wheel of Life underlying the *New Atlantis* emblem.

As also mentioned before, Francis Bacon refers to these two as the Truth of Being and the Truth of Knowing. The Ancient Egyptians referred to them as the 'Double Truth', and for this reason the final judgement of the soul was depicted by them as taking place in the Hall of the Two Truths ('*Maati*'). In mystical or biblical terms, they are Lover and Beloved, or

Bridegroom and Bride, or Spirit and Soul. The Mystical or Sacred Marriage, also known as the *Hieros Gamos*, signifies their sacred union that is the Whole Truth or One Truth.

## The Covenant

According to the Bible, Sound (the Word) produces Light (Genesis 1:3). This production of Light takes place on the First Day of Creation—the first of seven divine Days, in which all else is created within and out of this Light. From this we can begin to see that there is a direct link not only between sound and light but also between the seven natural notes of the musical scale, the seven-fold spectrum of light, and the Seven Days of Creation.

With respect to light and its spectrum, further on in the Bible the rainbow is referred to as the sign of the covenant made between God and all life on earth (Genesis 9:12-17). The rainbow is a circle of light manifesting the visible spectrum of seven primary colours that make up white light. In this sign or symbol of the covenant, God is equated with the light, whilst all living creatures, including mankind, constitute the receiver, observer and reflector of that light. As we each receive the light, both physical and spiritual, and come to both observe and reflect truly that light, so we become the knower of that light. The light exists; we come to know it. The one is the truth of being; the other is the truth of knowing. The light is represented by the cipher 7; we are each the cipher 5.

The zodiac or ‘wheel of life’ is also a circle of light, for life—true life—is light. As the author of St John’s Gospel says (John 1:1-4): “In Him [the Word/God] was life; and the life was the light of men.” The zodiac is thus synonymous with the rainbow—a circle of white light that is revealing its colours to us. To see this, we become participators in the experience: we become part of the whole.

The *New Atlantis* “Tempore Patet Occulta Veritas” emblem is emblematic of all this. It exists, and as we look at it we become the observer, then the discoverer, and then the knower. It represents the truth of being, and by means of it we become the truth of knowing. We complete the circle and fulfil the motto inscribed within the emblem’s circle, which describes the Two Truths being united as the One Truth—“Hidden Truth brought forth by Time”—the *Hieros Gamos*.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> This particular “Tempore Patet Occulta Veritas” emblem was first printed in the book *‘Of Prayer and Meditation: Contayning foure-teene Meditations, for the feauen dayes of the VVeeke: both for Mornings and Euenings. Treating of the principall matters and holy misteries of our Fayth / Written by F. Levves. de Granada / at London / Printed for Thomas Gosson and Richard Smith, and are to bee solde at the West doore of Paules Church, 1596.’*

The original of the actual picture, but set in a simple square, with no elaborate circular border or motto, is depicted on the title page of *‘The Nevve Testament of our Lord Iesus Christ’*, printed at Geneva by Conrad Badius, 1557.

<sup>2</sup> “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” (Proverbs 4:7.)

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<sup>3</sup> The word *arch* is derived from Greek *arche* meaning ‘source’, ‘circle’ or ‘beginning without end’ — similar in meaning to the word *zodiac*.

<sup>4</sup> “The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” (Numbers 6:26.)

<sup>5</sup> *Mercury* is derived from Latin *Mercurius*, itself derived from Egyptian *Maa-Kheru*, meaning ‘True Word’. As the Word of God, the divine Mercury is being referred to, not the individual or planetary Mercury.