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The Magus and the Seer

A Colloquium of Angels

For almost thirty years, a good one-third of a long and productive life, the Elizabethan mathematician, astrologer, alchemist, and natural philosopher John Dee (1527–1608/9) experimented with magic. The goal of these experiments was to make contact with the angels. From around 1580 until his death in the winter of 1608/9 Dee employed at least five different “scryers,” or crystal gazers, to aid him in this pursuit.¹ Of these ongoing experiments with various seers, it is the series of sessions with Edward Kelley (1555–1597) that stands out. The relationship between Dee and Kelley, a trained apothecary who had probably been convicted of coining, took place over seven intense years, from 1582 to 1589, variously against the cultural settings of London, Krakow, Prague, and various other Bohemian cities. It was a Europe marked by political intrigue, growing religious conflict, and strong apocalyptic fervors. Against this background, Kelley introduced Dee to a gallery of angelic beings and heavenly landscapes, ostensibly appearing to him in the crystal, pouring out drops of divine and esoteric secrets to the eager philosopher. Among the wonders were the lost language of Adam, knowledge of the angelic hierarchies, and secrets regarding the imminent apocalypse.

In itself, there was nothing new about scrying. Catoptromantic and crystallo-mantic practices, that is, the use of reflective surfaces, such as mirrors or crystals to contact spiritual entities, were folk traditions that could easily be traced back to the Middle Ages.² In Elizabethan England, crystal gazing had become something of an institution, with wandering scryers taking up residence with patrons for shorter periods, to provide their sought-after supernatural services. What seems new and surprising with Dee’s experiments is rather the contents and setting.

What was the motivation for one of Renaissance England's brightest minds to immerse himself in angel magic? This question has caused much trouble for historians. For a long time, Dee appeared as a somewhat two-faced figure: at the one hand stood his ultimately intelligible work in Renaissance mathematics and natural philosophy; on the other stood the magician. One response, taken by such an influential scholar as Frances Yates, has been to neglect Dee's "sensational angel-summonings" altogether, focusing instead on more "respectable" parts of his work.³ This tendency led Nicholas Clulee to lament that the angel conversations had provided "rich resources for romantic biography and writers of occult sympathies but something of an embarrassment to any attempt to consider Dee as a significant figure in the history of philosophy and science."⁴ That shortcoming he set out to mend, showing how Dee's interests in natural philosophy were reproduced and continued in the course of the angel conversations.⁵

John Dee and Renaissance Natural Philosophy

Seeing the crystal-gazing "colloquium of angels" on a continuum with the more readily explicable natural philosophy has proved a fruitful strategy. Clulee's approach was notably taken up and expanded by Deborah Harkness, who produced what is currently the best full-length monograph study of Dee's angel conversations.⁶ When we take this view, it seems plausible that Dee initially found the rationale for his attempt to make contact with the divine messengers in his quest for understanding nature.⁷ As a natural philosopher, Dee had produced three major works which, with hindsight, all help to put the angel magic in context of Renaissance intellectual life.

On the whole, Dee's intellectual project is situated in distinctive Renaissance habits of thought, what we might call the Renaissance *episteme*, primarily associated with the rise of the humanists and their intellectual struggles with the "scholastic" tradition.⁸ A foundation for Dee's work is the view that God revealed his mysteries through three "books": the human soul, revealed Scripture, and "the Book of Nature."⁹ The intellectual task of the natural philosopher largely consisted in deciphering, reading, and interpreting the Book of Nature. Setting out on this course more than half a century before Galileo famously asserted that the Book of Nature is written in the language of mathematics, Dee belonged to a generation that searched passionately for the right key to reading nature's language. Various, he found cues in optics, kabbalistic hermeneutics, emblematics,¹⁰ mathematics, astrology, and magic.

In his first major work, *Propaedeumata aphoristica* (1558), Dee contemplated the metaphysics of light and the prospects for an optical science to properly understand the cosmos. According to scripture, light had been God's first creation, and authorities such as Roger Bacon, whom Dee defended, held that understanding the properties and behavior of light would be the first step to a "universal science."¹¹ More than that, Dee advanced an argument that astrological magic, of the type one would find outlined in Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (1533), ought to be reformed by this emerging science. Building on the light metaphysics of the Muslim natural philosopher Al-Kindi, mediated through Grosseteste and Bacon, the idea was that the stellar and planetary influences which astrology based itself on were transported in the straight rays of light. Hence, they could also be trapped and manipulated through the careful use of mirrors or crystals. Dee had come to recommend that the wise natural philosopher would not coerce nature, but rather work with it, "forcing nature artfully" by means of the processes that God had already established; the replacement of coercive magical ritual by optical mechanics would be consistent with that principle.¹²

In the cryptic *Monas hieroglyphica* (1564) Dee applied a combination of Kabbalistic hermeneutics, astrological and alchemical theory, and symbolism to the study of the Book of Nature.¹³ Whereas the *Propaedeumata aphoristica* had been largely concerned with the act of *observing* nature, the *Monas* was devoted to deciphering and interpreting its text. The tract itself consisted of a central "hieroglyph," the *monas* symbol, accompanied by twenty-four theorems explaining its various permutations and hidden layers of meaning. It was thought as a grand "symbol of symbols," comprising the domains of astrology, alchemy, mathematics, geometry, and Kabbalistic hermeneutics. In addition to covering all these early modern modes of knowledge, the Hieroglyphic Monad was to be simultaneously "mathematically, magically, cabbalistically, and anagogically explained." Between the lines, circles, dots, and semicircles that make up the structure of the *monas* symbol, the student will find mathematical proportions and relations that, ostensibly, reveal something about the universe; furthermore, by approaching the hieroglyph in ways analogous to the kabbalistic readings of texts, the glyph can be morphed into a great number of other symbols and combinations of such. By finally reading the whole "anagogically," that is, assuming that apparently mundane relations speak of higher realities, the *monas* should reveal esoteric truths about the relations of man, nature, and God. From the geometrical shapes at its foundation (the point, line, and circle) spring all the principal numbers, and from this base the planetary, elemental, metallic, and alchemical symbols can also be generated.

The track of mathematics was taken up and expanded in Dee's influential "Mathematical Preface" to Euclid (1570).¹⁴ Anticipating to some extent the developments of the seventeenth century, Dee now argued that mathematics was at the foundation of several branches of natural philosophy, from optics and astrology to navigation and other applied arts. Following the Neoplatonism of Ficino, referencing the *Timaeus* and the *Republic* as well as the mathematical philosophy of Proclus, Dee marveled in the divine and perfect nature of mathematics, presenting a platonizing metaphysics of numbers. Numbers were intermediaries between the perfect heavenly realms and the terrestrial world; they participated in things both divine and mundane. Indeed, the numbers themselves existed in three different states: there were the "numbers numbering," reserved only for God, and implicated in the creation process, and there were the "numbers numbered," present in every creature of the corruptible and changing natural world. Thirdly, there was an intermediary state of the numbers, existing in the minds of angels and men. Thus, the human intellect was linked to a chain of understanding, the possibility of truth and certainty being guaranteed by the connection to the divine numbers. Perhaps more important, it was also in these pages that Dee prophesized about a future "Archemastrie," a perfect, unified science, wielded by the complete natural philosopher, the "Archemaster."¹⁵ Dee considered this complete discipline to be the unification of all the branches of natural philosophy, from the propagation of rays of light, the use of mathematics, the manipulation of astral radiation through the combination of optics and astrology, as well as the practice of alchemy.¹⁶ This new science was not merely content with speculation, but required active operation, a kind of mediating engagement with the natural world and the heavenly hierarchies.

Deborah Harkness speculates that Dee's description of the Archemastrie may indicate he was already at this point experimenting with capturing angels in crystals.¹⁷ At the very least, it would seem that he had erected a natural philosophical and esoteric framework that inherently allowed such experiments as a possibility. Around the time that Dee had written and published the "Mathematical Preface" he had also been on the verge of an intellectual breakdown. His diary entries reveal that the persistent attempts to attain perfect understanding and mastery of the Book of Nature had only met with frustration and despair. In 1569 he had made "special supplications" to Michael the Archangel, praying for help but receiving only silence. Obscure comments about a decision to "leave this world presently" in order to "enioye the bottomless fowntayne of all wisdom" suggest that Dee may even have contemplated suicide due to his melancholy situation.¹⁸

The angel conversations may have provided a less violent way out. When the corrupted text of the Book of Nature refused to reveal its

meaning, Dee would turn to the source of all wisdom and understanding, by enrolling in a “celestial school” run by angelic tutors. Just as God had sent his good angels to illuminate the patriarchs and prophets of old, including Enoch, Moses, Jacob, Esdras, Daniel, and Tobit, Dee was hoping to partake in the uncorrupted, perfect knowledge that could only come from a divine source.

Understanding the Spirit Diaries

Until quite recently, scholarship on Dee’s magical interest has tended to focus on its novelty and break with the “dirty magic” of the Middle Ages. This was notably the point of view of the Warburg school of research into Renaissance intellectual culture. In the vision of scholars such as Frances Yates and Peter French,¹⁹ it became important to show how John Dee, framed as Renaissance “Hermetic Magus,” was anticipating the more reputable disciplines of modern science and technological innovation with his *magia*, rather than hailing backward to the superstitious practices of medieval warlocks and necromancers. Crucial to this understanding was presenting Dee as a link between the Renaissance philosophers dedicated to the rediscovered *Hermetica*, Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in particular, and the “Scientific Revolution” yet to emerge in the coming centuries.²⁰ To a considerable extent, this led to the *neglect* of studying the angel diaries in any real extent, as they remained to the Warburg scholars an embarrassing facet of the otherwise progressive character.

The many studies of John Dee that have emerged since the 1980s, by Christopher Whitby, Nicholas Clulee, Deborah Harkness, Stephen Clucas, György Szőnyi, Håkan Håkansson, and others, have considerably remedied this shortcoming.²¹ That the angel diaries now occupy a more significant part of Dee scholarship is readily apparent from reviewing the various articles in Clucas’s fairly recent, representative and interdisciplinary anthology on John Dee.²² As was suggested above, the main strategy of these newer studies has been to point out the consistencies and overlaps between Dee’s natural philosophy and the contents and main aspirations and goals of the extant angel diaries. Dee may have found the final solution to his insatiable thirst for natural philosophical knowledge in crystals and conjurations, perhaps viewed primarily as a new optical science.²³ One should keep in mind that Dee operated with a clear division in the state of knowledge, connected to the biblical idea of the Fall. Adam had enjoyed a perfect, nondiscursive knowledge in Paradise, but after the Fall the sciences became imperfect, and prone to error and inaccuracy. Verily, the world itself, the Book of Nature, became a corrupted and unstable text

after the Fall. Against this context, crystallo-mantic evocations of angels were seen as the *via regia* to a reconstitution of a lost, prelapsarian science.

Harkness has suggested that the three main aims of the angelic conferences were all connected to this project: recovering the original and perfect *lingua adamica*; restoring the prelapsarian Kabbalah, as it had originally been revealed to Adam by the angel Raziel; and use these in combination to reconstruct, mend, and read the fallen and corrupted text of the Book of Nature.²⁴ The centrality of the Fall and the imminent apocalyptic restoration places the diaries thematically at the heart of late-sixteenth-century intellectual culture. So does the all-important search for the Adamic language, one of the more famous features of the angel conversations.²⁵

Enthusiasm about finding the primordial or universal language was a trend of the times. This endeavor had, as we have seen, a unique significance in the episteme of the Renaissance. The linguistic theories of the times held that the primordial language would possess a unique quality to refer directly to the things in the world, by naming their essences. This special quality had been gradually lost with the Fall, and the confusion of tongues, accounting in part for the inaccuracy both in language and in our knowledge of the world. Discovering or reconstructing the perfect tongue would have radical consequences for natural philosophy.

It is not unlikely that Dee himself found much inspiration for this pursue in abbot Johannes Trithemius of Sponheim, one of his favorite scholars.²⁶ Other notable scholars of the era who speculated on the issue of the primordial language, and whom Dee certainly knew well, include the humanist and Christian Kabbalist Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), who considered the three biblical languages as being closest to the Adamic language, and Guillaume Postel (1510–1581), who tended to side with Hebrew exclusively. A more colorful opinion was given somewhat later by the Swedish natural philosopher Andreas Kempe (1622–1689), arguing that God had spoken Swedish, that Adam named the animals in Danish, and that the Serpent had tempted Eve in French.²⁷ This was no doubt a convenient position in the context of the Swedish imperial ambitions at the time; however comical, it nicely illustrates the diffusion of the discourse on the primordial language and its correlations with contemporary natural languages.

While these considerations frame the angel conversations motivationally and thematically in light of Renaissance intellectual culture, another great asset of recent research has been that the *novelty* typically reserved for Dee's magical practices has been challenged. Among the more obvious observations is the fact that catoptromantic practices, including crystallo-mancy, had been a common folk tradition for generations. Indeed, Dee's manner of calling forth angels seems more influenced by "low" folk magic than intellectual "Hermetic" magic.²⁸ Additionally, Clucas has pointed

out that much of the magical paraphernalia used by Dee and Kelley in the angel workings seems to be taken almost directly from medieval sources, such as the pseudo-Solomonic tradition of the *Ars Notoria*.²⁹ We will look closer at some of these connections later, as we proceed to analyze and classify some of the “results” of the angelic scrying sessions.

The Magus and the Seer

These latter points bring us to another issue with the angel diaries that has, perhaps surprisingly, evaded attention in the scholarly literature. We usually talk about “Dee’s conversations with angels,” effectively downplaying the importance of his scryers. The primary reason is clearly that Dee has been the protagonist in the historical narratives that comment on the angel conversations, while very few studies have focused on the conversations in themselves, separated from the broader biography of Dee, mundane, magical, scientific, or otherwise. As we saw already, these narratives did for a long time find the conversations somewhat embarrassing, and when they were finally incorporated the main strategy was to place them in a continuum with Dee’s lofty natural philosophy. What, then, of the scryers? What was the role of Edward Kelley, the person who was actually doing the talking on behalf of such entities as “Gabriel,” “Ave,” “Nalvage,” or “Madimi”?³⁰ The tough question is, then: What really went on in the angel sessions?

It is not correct to say that this question has been completely left out of the literature. In fact, two models have frequently been assumed, although not developed in any systematic fashion: either Kelley was a charlatan, who duped his old master to gain influence over him, or else he was simply deranged. Both these models stand in opposition, of course, to the more esoteric claim that there was, in fact, supernatural agency involved in creating the angel sessions. As later chapters of this book will show, the supernaturalistic interpretation has been common among occultists, and continues in various forms to be so today. The “charlatan theory,” by far the dominating paradigm in the scholarly discourse, goes all the way back to the seventeenth century, where it was posited in the polemical “Preface” to Meric Casaubon’s *True and Faithful Relations (T&FR)*, the first publication of (some of) Dee’s magical diaries. Casaubon held that Dee, an otherwise pious Christian, had been deceived by a diabolical nigromancer, and offered his volume as a warning against dabbling with magic. Without the theological accusations, the suspicion of fraud has been taken up in modern scholarship, especially in the Warburg tradition. Yates, for one, wrote explicitly that “Kelly was a fraud

who deluded his pious master,” while French added the possibility that he “had some form of mental illness” as well.³¹ It is also noteworthy that those scholars who have taken it upon themselves to analyse the contents of the angel conversations in later years, including Harkness, Clulee, Szőnyi, and Håkansson, largely sidestep the difficult issue of “what went on,” steering by a kind of “methodologically agnostic” principle instead. This may have been a wise decision in light of the specific research questions that have been asked and answered, but it has also left a hole in our current understanding of this episode.

There is something unsatisfying about a situation where the question of what went on is left a battle between claims of fraud and madness on the one side, and supernaturalism on the other. Recently, James Justin Sledge attempted to remedy this gap in a close analysis of the angel diaries, with the ambitious goal of creating a satisfying “etiology” of the conversations.³² While recognizing that the charlatan theory has a few merits (Kelley was a known forger, had been in and out of prison, and had a financial motive for staying with Dee, who paid a high salary), Sledge rightly finds it wanting because of the serious inconsistencies it creates. From the sources it seems clear that Dee was the persistent, steadfast director and enthusiast of the actions, while Kelley was volatile, and at several occasions tried to opt out of the experiments, claiming the spirits to be wicked, or otherwise suggesting that there are better things to do than summoning angels (alchemy, for instance). The problem is that the charlatan theory requires casting Dee as deceived and exploited.³³ This does not make perfect sense, especially given Dee’s now quite clear rationale for engaging in these actions. One is reminded of the somewhat unorthodox but still intriguing remark made by Geoffrey James, that it was *Kelley* who was the exploited part in the duo, doing as he was told to earn his wages: “It was Dee, not Kelley, who was gaining the benefit from the magical ceremonies, for it sated his lust for ‘radical truths.’”³⁴

Sledge proposes that a combination of four considerations make the spirit actions fully explicable. First, a material contextualization, placing the angel conversations in the middle of the cultural, religious, and political environment of the late sixteenth century makes much of the content and the undertaking itself understandable. This is hardly controversial, and an understanding on these grounds may be said to have emerged already with the recent wave of Dee scholarship discussed above. Sledge’s second consideration consists in probing the extant material for signs of consistent behavioral traits that may indicate a preexisting psychotic condition in Kelley. This is a partial acknowledgment of the “madness thesis,” but one which urges a more systematic approach, informed by our best psychiatric models. Thirdly, it is suggested that the records could also be analyzed

looking for signs of “altered states of consciousness,” arising either due to specific conditions that obtain during the séances, by the very procedures observed in the rituals, or also in combination with the possible preexisting mental condition. Here too, the analysis should, according to Sledge, rest on what can be salvaged from contemporary research, particularly research looking for correlations between brain states identifiable and verifiable by neurobiology, and claims to special mental states associated with religious and “mystical” observance. Finally, Sledge argues that the abovementioned factors can be tied together in an analysis of the “formative epistemological processes” that allowed Kelley to operate somewhere between “wilful deception” and sincerity in his role and capabilities as seer.

Sledge’s analysis is a welcome contribution, refreshingly pointing at questions that everyone have found intriguing, but few have dared to answer. Nevertheless, one is left with the impression that some of the pathologizing is overstated, and perhaps even redundant. Indeed, one possible shortcoming with a theory that rests in part on the psychopathology of Edward Kelley is that what we need to account for goes beyond his mere person. Although Kelley was clearly the most famous and apparently most successful scryer that Dee employed, he was only working in about one-third of the total angel scrying sessions. What we need to explain, then, is not the particular case of Kelley (although it is a good and exceptionally well-documented case), but rather the entire cultural practice, the *institution* of scrying. We know that Dee had worked with the scryer Barnabas Saul prior to meeting Kelley in 1582, and suspect that he had at least one more scyer before this. But also after his collaboration with Kelley was terminated Dee continued with other scryers. He attempted to use his seven-year-old son, Arthur, but was not content with his performance. Finally he ended up with one Bartholomew Hickman, who must have done a pretty good job, since he continued to work with Dee for a total of sixteen years. Unfortunately, we know very little about the nature of these sessions since so little of the material survives. No doubt this is partly because Dee’s endeavor with Hickman had been built on an angelic prophecy stating that September 1600 would mark some tremendous breakthrough in his project. When nothing happened, Dee demonstrated his frustration by burning the records from nine years of angel conversations.³⁵ However, it is worth noting that the problem was not Hickman’s scrying abilities as such—they must surely have been convincing enough, since Dee continued to work with him on and off for seven more years even after this incident.

In order to assess the whole cultural practice of scrying, then, I will suggest that contextual factors, coupled perhaps with analyses of the actual practices (i.e., the techniques, procedures, use of paraphernalia,

etc.) should, in the main, suffice. Additionally, restating and expanding Sledge's fourth consideration may be particularly fruitful: the "formative epistemological processes" he is concerned with, involving active imagination, mythmaking, and role play is conceived of as something akin to Tanya Luhrmann's concept of "interpretive drift" observed in her fieldwork of contemporary witchcraft and magical groups in England.³⁶ Erecting an updated theoretical framework, which could help explain such processes more generally, I submit, would do well to consider the vast literature and research in cognitive and social psychology on the centrality of role play and social expectations on memory, identity, and reports of "anomalous experiences" and behavior. The sociocognitive framework has proved successful for making sense of such things as hypnosis, "multiple personalities," false memories (about past lives, alien abductions, satanic ritual abuse, etc.), "trance," and, indeed, spirit possession and exorcism.³⁷ All of these are sociocultural phenomena which, I think most would agree, share some vague family resemblance to claims we associate with the practice of scrying. Such an approach would focus on the institutional role of scrying in the given period, its cultural significance and recognition, and the social *expectations* embedded in the practice, especially the tensions between expert and client. Some of the mystique of the angel conversations is unveiled when we consider the relation between Kelley and Dee as taking part in a culturally sanctioned practice, probably not the most common one, but one which was certainly not exceptional or unheard of.

A further demystification of Kelley may arise from looking at him through different sources, and hence different eyes. As Susan Bassnett has pointed out, the perception of Kelley changes somewhat when we see him described from the perspective of the Bohemians whom he spent the height of his career with, instead of through Dee's eyes, which perspective obviously dominates in the diaries.³⁸ First of all, we should note with some interest that when Kelley and Dee parted company on the occasion of Dee's return to England in 1588, Kelley's days as a scryer were numbered. This reminds us again of Geoffrey James's claim that Kelley had only stayed in the scrying business because of Dee's will and lust for "radical truths." It would at the very least seem as if Kelley was better off after he parted with Dee, working as a successful and sought-after alchemist. His acquisition of land and property, including a gold mine, his involvement in political intrigue, and his being knighted by the emperor Rudolph II in or about 1589, all testify to this.³⁹ Indeed, Bassnett has suggested that Kelley's success and upward social mobility in Bohemia may have produced feelings of envy and resentment in Dee, who finally decided to turn homeward.⁴⁰ At any rate, a quite different picture of Kelley emerges from these perspectives.

The Magic of the Angelic Conferences: Toward a Typology

With these background considerations we may proceed to the content of the magical diaries, looking for a way to localize, classify, and analyze the components that in modern times have become “Enochian magic.” Dee and Kelley’s cooperation started in 1582, and lasted for about five years, until 1587. Over these years hundreds of pages of transcripts of angel conversations were produced, along with several *libri* detailing specific magical instructions, prepared separately on the angels’ command. Apart from the diary transcripts published by Casaubon in 1659, the remains of these actions are preserved in the manuscript collections of the British Library.⁴¹

There are several ways one could approach this material in order to make a typology. One effort of classifying the themes of the extant material has been submitted by György E. Szőnyi. Szőnyi divides the totality of material received from the angels into four thematic categories:⁴²

1. Descriptions of visions of the divine cosmic order and the world of angels sustaining it;
2. Descriptions of rituals and magical invocations (i.e., more or less explicitly magical material);
3. Apocalyptic/prophetic prognostications, predictions foretelling the fall of various empires and the rise of new, spiritually pious regimes;
4. Instructions on the *lingua adamica*.

This may seem a pertinent classification if only to get a clear overview of the themes covered: we certainly find major portions of the angel diaries dealing with mystical cosmology, various kinds of apocalypticism, magical instructions, and the Adamic language. However, these are *not* separate concerns. They all mix together and relate to one another, in such a way that, for instance, the magical instructions, which mainly concern us here, heavily incorporate the Adamic language as a component, and are embedded in both the metaphysical/theological visions of the universe and in apocalyptic speculations. The magical system (or systems) appearing in the context of the angelic revelations cannot be separated from these other concerns. Thus, the typology is not helping us much further if we want to get a clearer overview of the *magical* component itself.

I will propose a slightly different approach, which better fits the agenda of this book and, I believe, does more justice to the magical component of Dee and Kelley’s workings. First of all, a line should be drawn between the angel conversations themselves, that is, the way Dee and Kelley actually *worked*, and the arcane magical material “received” *through* these conversations. In other words, level one of “Dee’s magic” is

a catoptronic, Ars Notoria inspired crystal gazing, aimed at communion with the angels and revelations of higher knowledge concerning natural philosophy, the apocalypse, and God's salvific project; level two, on the other hand, comprises a number of magical systems, grimoire-like in form, which appear in the course of the angel diaries.

I should take haste to mention that this distinction does not work in an absolute sense, since in the earliest sessions instructions were given to make certain ritual tools, which seem to have been put to general use later, when contacting the angels. In other words, at least some of the practices observed by Dee and Kelley when contacting the angels already came from Kelley, "through revelation," in the same way as I argue for the second category. Already in Dee and Kelley's very first session together, on March 10, 1582, there were given designs for a "Holy Table" or altar, and a waxen Sigillum Dei.⁴³ These were built, and apparently used in consequent scrying sessions, together with more such instruments described by the angels. But in addition to these instructions large quantities of other arcane information was imparted: letter squares, invocations in the Adamic language, names of spiritual entities (angels, Princes, "Seniors," and even cacodaemons), and ways of calling them forth. It is this kind of material which I believe must be distinguished from the procedure of the workings through which it was "received."

Furthermore, this magical material can be subdivided in various ways. I find it most prudent to divide the magical system received in the angel conversations first into five components, based on a distinction made by Dee himself, and which also seems to signify important differences in content and intended function. This classification relates to the way the outcome of the angelic conversations was recorded. To begin with, Dee recorded every session diligently and chronologically, containing the dialogues with the angels, including all their commands, answers, and revelations. These diary entries are preserved in MS Sloane 3188 and Cotton Appendix XLVI, the latter of which forms the basis for Casaubon's 1659 publication, *A True & Faithful Relation*. But in addition to these "proceedings" Dee was also on a few occasions commanded to prepare special books, where more or less independent parts of the magical revelations were concentrated and systematized. The result was a total of five separate texts, which I will refer to as "revealed books," none of which were published by Casaubon. The contents of these books show, in concentrated and systematized form, the magical system(s) revealed through the conversations. For this reason they present themselves as a pertinent basis for a classification of the magical material.

A brief summary of the five received books is in order. The first book is the one commonly referred to as *Liber Logaeth/Loagaeth*, or "the Book of the Speech of God."⁴⁴ The book is the condensation of the angel con-

versations that started March 23 to 29, 1583, and went on for about a month, and saw the first transmission of the alleged Angelic or Adamic language.⁴⁵ It takes the form of ninety-five gridded tables, mostly of forty-nine by forty-nine squares each, filled up with letters, and forty-nine “calls” or prayers prefacing the tables.⁴⁶ Interestingly, John Reeds made the discovery that eight of the tables in *Liber Loagaeth* are actually copied from Dee’s *Book of Soyga* in Sloane 8, meaning that not all of them were created by Kelley/the angels.⁴⁷ The prefacing prayers are in the Angelic tongue and were not translated, with the exception of a few individual words. Also included toward the end of the manuscript is the twenty-one-letter Angelic alphabet, revealed by Kelley on March 26. Although the intended use of these letter tables is somewhat unclear, the angels did tell Dee that “when the time is right” the book should be used together with the Holy Table to initiate the apocalyptic “redefinition of the natural world.”⁴⁸ No other instructions of its function or use are extant, except obscure hints that the mysteries of the tables will only be revealed by God at his chosen moment.⁴⁹ With reference to Szőnyi’s classification discussed above, this already demonstrates clearly the way in which apocalypticism, speculations on *lingua adamica*, and magic are all interconnected in Dee’s angel diaries.

Angelic letter							
Name	Pa	Veh	Ged	Gal	Or	Un	Graph
Latin equivalent	B	C	G	D	F	A	E

Angelic letter							
Name	Tal	Gon	Na	Ur	Mals	Ger	Drux
Latin equivalent	M	I	H	L	P	Q	N

Angelic letter							
Name	Pal	Med	Don	Ceph	Van	Fan	Gisg
Latin equivalent	X	O	R	Z	U	S	T

TABLE 1.1. The 21 letters of the Angelic alphabet, in the order they appear at the bottom of the last leaf of Sloane 3189 (*Liber Loagaeth*). The table shows the names of the letters, and their Latin equivalents, as explained in Dee and Kelley’s angel diaries.

The second revealed book bears the title *De heptarchia mystica*, and is a rather compendious collection of the essential information received by Dee and Kelley before they left England for the continent in 1583.⁵⁰ The content of this book forms a magical system wherewith the magician can call upon the “heptarchical Kings and Princes,” purportedly ruling the seven days of the week.⁵¹ The book includes names of these “good Heptarchical Angels,” their various seals and sigils, the nature of their offices (e.g., imparting arcane knowledge, or teaching alchemy), and supplications to call them forth. The system of angels set over the seven days of the week reminds one of earlier magical manuals of similar intent, such as the *Heptameron* attributed to the medieval Italian physician and astrologer Pietro d’Abano.⁵² One should add, however, that Dee’s spirit names and conjurations were, as always, idiosyncratic, and it is the structure and intent rather than concrete names and sigils that bear resemblance.

The third revealed book is the *48 Claves angelicae*, the forty-eight angelic keys.⁵³ These are really nineteen short verses, written in the Angelic language, with English translations given at the angels’ discretion. While the first eighteen are freestanding invocations of unclear function, the nineteenth is dedicated to the so-called thirty “Aires,” a set of obscure entities that are explained more systematically in the *fourth* revealed book, *Liber scientiae, auxilii, et victoriae terrestris* (“Book of terrestrial science, support, and victory”).⁵⁴ The thirty Aires seem to be certain spirits, spiritual realms, or principles located in various parts of the air surrounding the earth. Each of these thirty Aires control a small number of spirits (an average of three each, or ninety-one in total), which further control legions of lesser spirits, extending in a vast hierarchy of angelic creatures—comprising a total of 491,577 angels.

What is particularly interesting is that each of the ninety-one spirits corresponds to a country or geographical region in the world, as it looked through European Renaissance eyes (or more precisely, as it had looked in late antiquity: the geographical names are all derived from Ptolemy), and a mystic name is given to each of the regions. For instance we learn that Egypt is Occodon, Syria Pascomb, and Mesopotamia Valgars, that these are ruled by the angels Zarzilg, Zinggen, and Alpudus, sat under the Aire called LIL.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the twelve tribes of ancient Israel are also listed, with directions apparently pointing out where, in their dispersion, each has gone. The intention of this system seems to be that by “calling” the right Aires with the nineteenth “key” of the *Claves angelicae* the magician can gain the authority over the geographical entities and presumably the power to control great geopolitical events (thus indicated by the title of the book, “terrestrial victory”). In other words, this was a form of magic most desirable for Dee, being the occasional counselor

to the Imperial Elizabethan throne. As Harkness has commented, it also seems that another intention was to localize and order the twelve lost tribes.⁵⁶ According to the prophecies, the tribes should return to Israel with the onset of the apocalypse; Dee may have envisioned a role for himself in this apocalyptic project. It should be noted that politics and the rearrangement of empires and nations feature frequently in the apocalyptic discourse of the angel conversations generally as well.

The fifth and last revealed book is known as *Tabula bonorum angelorum*, “the table of good angels.”⁵⁷ Again, this is a collection of prayers or invocations, but this time related to a specific fourfold magical square or table, referred to by Dee as the “Great Table” or “table of good angels.” comprising four lesser “Watchtowers.” These letter squares were transmitted by Kelley on two consecutive days, June 25–26, 1584, while Dee and Kelley were in Krakow.⁵⁸ From the four “watchtower” squares, connected to form the “Great Table” by inserting what is referred to as “the black cross” between them (a cross scribbled black by Dee, containing more mysterious names), are extracted numerous angels, “Seniors” (purportedly the six that stand before the throne of God in *Revelations*), Kings, secret names of God, and even demons; all ordered in an elaborate hierarchy.

The methods of extracting the names, as well as the function of each entity, were described on June 26, when the angel Ave declared the tables to contain:

1. All human knowledge.
2. Out of it springeth Physick
3. *The knowledge of the elemental Creatures, amongst you. How many kinds there are, and for what use they were created. Those that live in the air, by themselves. The property of the fire—which is the secret life of all things.*
4. *The knowledge, finding and use of Metals.*
The vertues of them.
The congelations, and vertues of Stones.
5. *The Conjoining and knitting together of Natures. The destruction of Nature, and of things that may perish.*
6. *Moving from place to place [as into this Country, or that Country at pleasure]*
7. *The knowledge of all crafts Mechanical.*
8. *Transmutatio formalis, sed non essentialis.*⁵⁹

No small set of feats, to be sure. The *Tabula angelorum bonorum* is Dee’s systematic ordering of the material relating to this Great Table. In addition to the table itself, it includes lists of angels and divine names,

r	Z	i	l	a	f	A	y	t	l	p	a	e	T	a	O	A	d	u	p	t	D	n	i	m																							
a	r	d	Z	a	i	d	p	a	L	a	m		a	a	b	c	o	o	r	o	m	e	b	b																							
c	z	o	n	s	a	r	o	Y	a	u	b	x	T	o	g	c	o	n	x	m	a	l	G	m																							
T	o	i	T	t	z	o	P	a	c	o	C	a	n	h	o	d	D	i	a	l	e	a	o	c																							
S	i	g	a	s	o	m	r	b	z	n	h	r	p	a	t	A	x	i	o	V	s	P	s	N																							
f	m	o	n	d	a	T	d	i	a	r	i	p	S	a	a	i	x	a	a	r	V	r	o	i																							
o	r	o	i	b	A	h	a	o	z	p	i		m	p	h	a	r	s	l	g	a	i	o	l																							
t	N	a	b	r	V	i	x	g	a	s	d	h	M	a	m	g	l	o	i	n	L	i	r	x																							
O	i	i	i	t	T	p	a	l	O	a	i		o	l	a	a	D	n	g	a	T	a	p	a																							
A	b	a	m	o	o	a	C	u	c	a	C	p	a	L	c	o	i	d	x	P	a	c	n																								
N	a	o	c	O	T	t	n	p	r	n	T	o	n	d	a	z	N	z	i	V	a	a	s	a																							
o	c	a	n	m	a	g	o	t	r	o	i	m	i	i	d	P	o	n	s	d	A	s	p	i																							
S	h	i	a	l	r	a	p	m	z	o	x	a	x	r	i	n	h	t	a	r	n	d	i	L																							
m o t i b												a T n a n												n a n T a												b i t o m											
b	O	a	Z	a	R	o	p	h	a	R	a	a	d	o	n	p	a	T	d	a	n	V	a	a																							
u	N	n	a	x	o	P	S	o	n	d	n		o	l	o	a	G	e	o	o	b	a	u	a																							
a	i	g	r	a	n	o	m	a	g	g	m	O	P	a	m	n	o	V	G	m	d	n	m																								
o	r	p	m	n	i	n	g	b	e	a	l	o	a	p	l	s	T	e	d	e	c	a	o	p																							
r	s	O	n	i	z	i	r	l	e	m	u	C	s	c	m	i	o	o	n	A	m	l	o	x																							
i	z	i	n	r	C	z	i	a	M	h	l	h	V	a	r	s	G	d	L	b	r	l	a	p																							
M	O	r	d	i	a	l	h	C	t	G	a		o	i	P	t	e	a	a	p	D	o	c	e																							
O	c	a	n	c	h	i	a	s	o	m	t	p	p	s	u	a	c	N	r	Z	i	r	Z	a																							
A	r	b	l	z	m	i	i	l	p	i	z		S	i	o	d	a	o	i	n	r	z	f	m																							
O	p	a	n	a	l	a	m	S	m	a	P	r	d	a	l	t	T	d	n	a	d	i	r	e																							
d	O	l	o	P	i	n	i	a	n	b	a	a	d	i	x	o	m	o	n	s	i	o	s	p																							
r	x	p	a	o	c	s	i	z	i	x	p	x	O	o	D	p	z	i	A	p	a	n	l	i																							
a	x	t	i	r	V	a	s	t	r	i	m	e	r	g	o	a	n	n	P	A	C	r	a	r																							

TABLE 1.2. The “Great Table” as shown in Dee’s *Tabula bonorum angelorum*, Sloane MS 3191. There are some minor details which I have not reproduced here (some letters that have been scratched out and replaced, and a few inverted letters). The table shows the four Watchtowers, with the uniting “Black Cross” in the middle. Take note that the Black Cross does not appear in Golden Dawn sources (which instead arrange its divine letters in a “Tablet of Union”), neither in the Sloane MS 307 version of the Great Table (see chapters two and three; cf. table 4).

indexed with their specific powers and attributions, and also different prayers or invocations to contact and control the entities in hierarchical order, from the highest secret twelve names of God, to the lowest serving angels. Also included are the names of demons and bad angels, which can perform the negative of what their corresponding angels do. Thus, where the angels of “physick” (i.e., medicine) can heal wounds, the inverse “cacodaemons” can cause them.

* * *

The contents of these five books comprise the totality of what has in various combinations and interpretations of later centuries become known as “Enochian magic.” According to the division presented by the books itself, we can speak of the following *four key components* forming the foundation of this magic:

1. The Angelic language, later referred to as “Enochian” (from the books *Liber Logaeth* and, especially, the *48 Claves angelicae*);
2. The Heptarchic system (*De heptarchia mystica*);
3. The Aires, or (per later conventions) Aethyrs (*Liber scientiae, auxilii, et victoriae Terrestris*, with the *Claves angelicae*);
4. The magic of the “Great Table,” or “Four Watchtowers” (*Tabula angelorum bonorum*).

It should be noted, of course, that even these four do interact and mix with each other to some extent. Most notably, the Angelic language is a key component of the system of the Aires, as shown above. In addition, the ninety-one spirits belonging to the Aires are linked to the Great Table by certain sigils that apply to its letter squares.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the mentioned classes do stand out with a significant degree of exclusive features; the cryptic apocalyptic statements surrounding the *Liber Logaeth*; the Heptarchic system with its encyclopaedic, grimoire-style list of spirits, sigils, and the hours and days of calling them forth; the (probably) geopolitical and apocalyptic system of the Aires; and the almost universally applicable system for evocation of angels and cacodaemons of the Great Table, providing rather mundane services such as the finding of precious metals, healing sickness, and transportation from one country to another.

In closing, some words should be spent concerning the accuracy of labeling these works “received,” and the possible historical problems of doing so. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, recent Dee scholarship emphasizes the continuity with medieval magical traditions, a focus

that has proved quite successful. Among the discoveries that have been made is that the ritual paraphernalia “received” by the angels early on, the most significant being the Holy Table and the Sigillum Dei Emeth, seem to have been appropriated from traceable sources known to be in Dee’s possession. Thus, Stephen Clucas has shown how the Sigillum is an almost exact replica of a sigil from the fourteenth-century *Liber iuratus Honorii*.⁶¹ Joseph Peterson has shown that there are significant similarities between the design of Dee’s Holy Table and certain diagrams from the medieval *Ars Almadel*.⁶² It has even been conjectured that the alphabet of the Angelic or Adamic language revealed by the angels was taken from Giovanni Pantheus’s 1530 tract *Voarchadumia contra alchimiam*, which was also in Dee’s possession.⁶³ The orthographic similarities in this latter case are not too apparent, and the relation seems weaker than with Clucas’s and Peterson’s findings; nevertheless, it does not seem implausible that, as Claire Fanger has predicted, more such cases of similarity and correspondence with earlier manuscripts may surface as more of the medieval sources become better known to scholars.⁶⁴ This seems to be the general direction that research on the relation between Renaissance and medieval magic is going.⁶⁵

The idiosyncrasy of the systems resulting *from* the actions stems mostly from the angelic language, the complexity and design of the magical letter squares used, and the specific names of the angels and entities to be evoked. Apart from that, the structure and magical theories seem to be heavily influenced by medieval and early modern sources, notably the *Heptameron*, Agrippa, and the grimoires.

Kelley died under uncertain circumstances in Bohemia around 1597,⁶⁶ and Dee himself followed a decade later, in 1609. Despite Dee’s great enthusiasm with having these “new” magical systems revealed and explained by the angels, we have no indication that Dee, Kelley, or Hickman at any point got their final signal from the angels, telling them to commence work with the largely apocalyptic magical systems they had received.⁶⁷ As we will see through the course of this book, many have tried to do so since.