

Sacred Geometry of Being: Pessoa's Esoteric Imagery and the Geometry of Modernism

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Keywords

Pessoa, Geometry, Esotericism, Sensationism, Yeats, Pound, Artistic Avant-Gardes.

Abstract

It is a known fact that throughout his life Pessoa was interested in and conversant with an array of esoteric currents and doctrines. Underpinning that interest was a marked tendency to a form of symbolic thinking encapsulated in the lines "[...] my thinking is condemned / To symbol and analogy" from a 1907 poem by the incipient heteronym Alexander Search, which recur in a fragment from 1932 of the dramatic poem *Fausto*. Pessoa's continued symbolic thinking, informed by copious readings mainly in Western Esotericism, allowed him to develop a creative hermeneutical approach to esoteric epistemologies. This essay will be concerned specifically with Pessoa's conception of the mystical significance of geometrical forms, arguing that they not only enriched the figurative expressiveness of his poetry but also played a crucial role in his formulation of a poetics of Sensationism. Pessoa's use of geometric imagery will be considered in the context of the fascination with sacred geometry and exploration of its aesthetic potential displayed by other modernists, like Yeats and Pound, and by avant-garde movements from the early XXth century which were also driven by analogous concerns, such as Futurism, Vorticism, Cubism, Expressionism and Suprematism.

Palavras-chave

Pessoa, Geometria, Esoterismo, Sensacionismo, Yeats, Pound, Vanguardas Artísticas.

Resumo

É conhecido o interesse de Pessoa por e a sua familiaridade com uma variedade de correntes e doutrinas esotéricas ao longo da sua vida. A esse interesse subjaz uma tendência marcada para uma forma de pensamento simbólico cristalizada nos versos "[...] o meu pensamento está condenado / ao símbolo e à analogia" de um poema de 1907 pelo heterónimo incipiente Alexander Search, que seriam retomados num fragmento de 1932 do poema dramático *Fausto*. O pensamento simbólico continuado de Pessoa, informado por leituras abundantes sobretudo acerca do esoterismo ocidental, permitiu-lhe desenvolver uma abordagem hermeneutica criativa às epistemologias esotéricas. Este ensaio prender-se-á especificamente com a concepção do significado místico de formas geométricas por parte de Pessoa, defendendo que estas não só enriqueceram a expressividade figurativa da sua ,

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mas também desempenharam um papel crucial na sua formulação de uma poética do sensacionismo. O uso da imagética geométrica por Pessoa será considerado no contexto da fascinação com geometria sagrada e da exploração do seu potencial estético por outros modernistas, como Yeats e Pound, e pelas vanguardas artísticas do início do século XX igualmente motivadas por preocupações análogas, tais como o futurismo, o vorticismo, o cubismo, o expressionismo e o suprematismo.

Fernando Pessoa's considerable knowledge and long-lasting interest in the Kabbalah, Gnosticism, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, Astrology and Alchemy – corroborated by the large number of his writings about these matters and of books on these doctrines in his private library – is gradually finding acceptance in the critical exegesis of his works. However, his avowed interest in esotericism has not received sufficient consideration in the context of his time and in relation to other major modernist writers and artists whose work was informed by analogous interests. This paper purports that Pessoa derived key structuring principles of his poetics and a wealth of imagery pervading his poetry and that of the heteronyms, notably Álvaro de Campos, from these esoteric sources. Due to space constraints, I will limit my focus to geometric imagery that recurs in poetic and aesthetic texts, exploring its links to esotericism. Pessoa's deployment of geometry is here considered in relation to that of contemporary modernist writers like Yeats and Pound and of avant-garde movements like Futurism, Vorticism, Cubism, Expressionism and Suprematism as equally symptomatic of the geometrical turn in Modernism. According to Miranda Hickman:

By 1925, when Le Corbusier announced in *Urbanisme* that “modern art and thought” were tending in the “direction of geometry” and that “the age” was “essentially a geometrical one” (*City of Tomorrow* xxi-xxii), he was advancing a claim that had become so uncontroversial as to be commonplace: in the first two and a half decades of the twentieth century, the geometric shape was increasingly used as a vehicle for the nonrepresentational impulse in the visual arts and was pervading visual culture more generally. Britain, continental Europe, Russia, and slightly later, North America, had been swept by the abstract geometric art of the Cubists, Expressionist, Futurists, Suprematists, and Constructivists, as well as by the geometric architecture and design of Gropius's Bauhaus and of Le Corbusier himself.

(Hickman, 2005: 2)

Pessoa's use of geometric imagery can be regarded as a form of sacred geometry, which consists in attributing symbolic and mystical meanings to certain geometric shapes and proportions. He refers specifically to the mystical significance of numbers and geometrical forms in a fragment from an esoteric text, entitled “Way of the Serpent”, in which he states

As numbers and figures are the external signs of the order and destiny of the world, the simplest arithmetic, algebraic or geometric operation contains, as long as is it well done, *great revelations*; and without a need for further signs mathematics holds the keys to all mysteries [...] there is no reason to suppose that Euclides, in his Geometry books, had any speculation other than a geometric one; but Euclides's books, from the first to the last proposition, are revelatory signs for those who know how to read them.

(in Centeno, 1985: 31; my emphasis, my translation)

I argue that Pessoa's use of sacred geometry is related to his quest for maximum knowledge through accumulated experience – encapsulated in the tenet “Sentir tudo de todas as maneiras” (Pessoa, 1990: 148, 263) [“To feel everything in every way” (Pessoa, 1998: 146)] which underpins his self-styled *Sensacionismo* [Sensationism] – and for heightened existence through total depersonalisation, embodied by the heteronyms, Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos and epitomised by the latter's statement “Ah não ser eu toda a gente e toda a parte!” (Pessoa, 1990: 73) [“Ah if only I could be all people and all places!” (Pessoa, 2006: 160)] at the close of his debut poem, “Ode Triunfal” [“Triumphal Ode”] .

Geometric imagery featured in Pessoa's poetry from an early age. “The Circle” (in Centeno & Reckert, 1978: 175), an English poem attributed to the literary *persona* Alexander Search confirms that Pessoa was already familiar with a key symbol of sacred geometry at the age of nineteen. My emphasis:

THE CIRCLE

I traced a *circle* on the ground,
It was a *mystic figure* strange
Wherein I thought there would abound
Mute *symbols* adequate of *change*,
And complex *formulas* of *Law*,
Which is the jaws of *Change's* maw.

My simpler thoughts in vain had stemmed
The current of this madness free,
But that my thinking is condemned
To *symbol and analogy*:
I deemed a circle might condense
With calm all mystery's violence.

And so in *cabalistic mood*
A circle traced I curious there;
Imperfect the made circle stood
Thought formed with minutest care.
From *magic's* failure deeply I
A lesson took to make me sigh.

Alexander Search

July 30th. 1907.

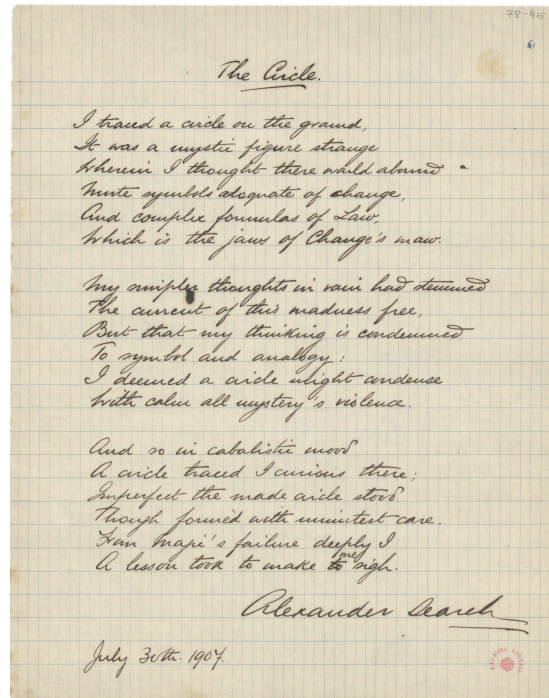


Fig. 1. BNP/E3, 78-45r.

In this confessional lyric, Search uses occult terminology (apparent in the underlined words) to evoke a past esoteric experience. By tracing a circle on the ground, the *persona* hoped that the mystical power of this primary form, traditionally associated with the divine, would reveal to him secret knowledge, represented by the symbols of change in the zodiac and the laws of the hermetic Kabbalah that rule the correspondences between the spiritual and the material worlds. However, he fails to attain the revelation sought through the means of this magical act since the circle was drawn imperfectly, signifying his condition of neophyte. As a result, all that is left to him is a condition of bewilderment and continuous inquiry encapsulated in his surname and epitomised by the phrase “condemned | To symbol and analogy”. The fact that this latter phrasing recurs several years later in the unfinished poetic drama *Fausto* and in Álvaro de Campos’s poem “Psiquetipia” shows the prevalence of this dialectic of quest and deferred revelation throughout Pessoa’s life and across his manifold poetic stances. The ostensible failure of the *persona*’s magical endeavours in this poem betrays the “kabbalistic humour” which, according to Yvette Centeno (in Centeno & Reckert, 1978: 165) stems from readings about magic and the Kabbalah, likely facilitated through Franz Hartmann’s *Magic White and Black* and Hargrave Jennings’s *The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries*, of which Pessoa owned editions respectively from 1904 and 1907.

Several of the books in Pessoa’s library dating from this period also concern astrology, a system which is based on correspondences between astronomical phenomena and events in the human world. Its key figure, the wheel of the zodiac, is a circle of twelve divisions of celestial longitude that are centred upon the ecliptic: the apparent path of the Sun across the celestial sphere over the course of the year. These aspects were explained at length in Robert Fludd’s *De Astrologie*, which Pessoa read in a French translation from 1907, and which displayed circular images of the zodiac (Fludd, 1907: 197). That Pessoa was an assiduous and skilled practitioner of astrology throughout his life is corroborated by the hundreds of horoscopes found in his archive, some of which have been collected in *Cartas Astrológicas* (2011). As argued by the editors of the volume and demonstrated by its contents, astrology influenced the theory of the heteronyms, providing Pessoa with coherent formulae to delineate their complimentary personalities drawn from an ancestral tradition. Another facet of Pessoa’s interest in astrology consists of a tendency to cast horoscopes of well-known literary or historical figures.

A case in point is Pessoa’s natal astrological chart of W. B. Yeats, which would have been of particular interest to him since the Irish poet was born on the same day as he was, twenty-three years earlier.

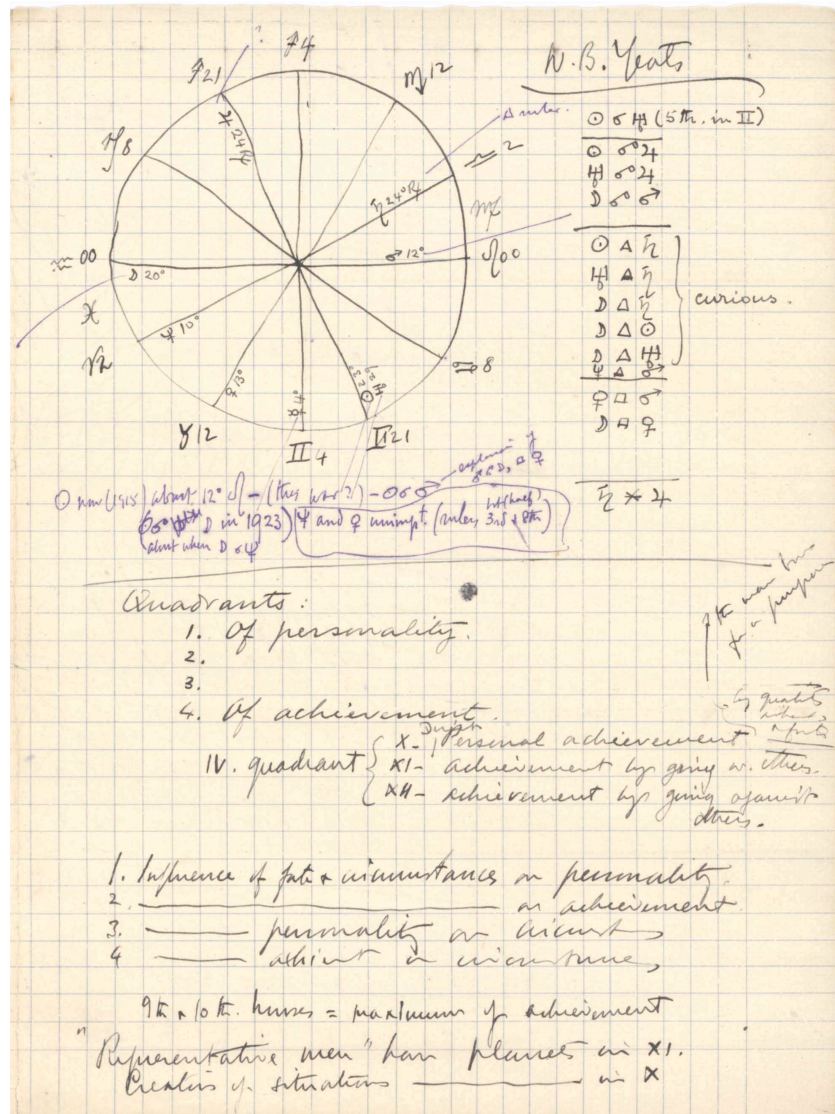


Fig. 2. BNP/E3, S4-15^v.

The combinations of planets in the horoscope of his fellow Gemini intrigued Pessoa, as shown by the comment “curious” he wrote about the astrological annotations on the right hand side of the page. These would have made him aware “that the configurations of [Yeats’s] horoscope were particularly auspicious”, as noted by Neil Mann, who highlights the fact that “Mars and Neptune are also both in a wide trine with Yeats’s Midheaven, which signifies worldly achievement and career, and can therefore be seen as related to Yeats’s conviction of his poetic vocation”.¹ The references to the quadrants of personality and achievement in the lower part of the manuscript suggest that Pessoa arrived at similar conclusions. In the expert opinion of Paulo Cardoso, “it is quite likely that Pessoa would have made such a reading, especially as both those quadrants of that horoscope display important astrological factors and given the fact that the figure is right above those

¹ Neil Mann, *Yeats’s Vision* <<http://www.yeatsvision.com/Charts.html>> [accessed 30 November 2014]

notes, but didn't write it down in this document".² Pessoa's emphasis on personality and achievement with regard to Yeats's astrological chart is, in my view, related to his preoccupation with questions of genius and celebrity which are central to *Erostratus* with which this document bears some relation. This claim is reinforced by the remark, "'Representative men' have planets in XI" at the bottom of the page, which establishes a link between the horoscopes on this document (Yeats's is preceded by Gladstone's) and the Emersonian notion of representative men put forward in the eponymous book, which Pessoa is here citing and was possibly (re-)reading.³ Moreover, the comments written in purple ink directly underneath the chart establish direct links signalled by lines between specific houses in the chart and the year 1923, in which Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, revealing Pessoa's interest in scrutinising its astrological circumstances. This event likely caused Pessoa to return to the horoscope of the Irish poet he had originally cast in 1915, as suggested by the use of a different coloured pen and the clear differences in writing style from those used for the chart and its analysis underneath. Hence, whereas the statement beginning with the solar symbol (a circled dot) followed by "now (1915)" and the question "(this war?)" refer back to the time when the horoscope was cast, the astrological notations (Sun in opposition to Moon and Moon in conjunction to Neptune) about "1923" refer to the time after this year in which Pessoa returned to Yeats's natal chart. If, as I argue, this document is related to *Erostratus*, this would have likely occurred in 1925, for, as Angel Crespo observes, it was during this year that Pessoa drafted chapters that comprise this unfinished essay. However, argues Crespo, "*Erostratus* was conceived when Pessoa was living through the vanguard of the *Orpheu* and *Portugal Futurista* magazines and, following an interruption of about eight years, was intensely edited around 1925", basing his claim on the existence of several handwritten documents dating from 1915 through to 1917 which constitute the genesis of this planned work (Crespo, 2000: 371). Therefore, Yeats's horoscope and notes can be seen as forming part of a set of preliminary case studies of men of genius, particularly poetic genius, who had attained fame, which informed Pessoa's meditations on those matters and to which he returned in 1925.

Yeats was equally prodigal in casting horoscopes, as evinced by the wealth of notebooks with astrological calculations he kept well into his old age.

In collaboration with his wife, George Yeats, he famously devised the esoteric system expounded in *A Vision*, which sought to systematise his theories of human personality and history and provided important background to many of

² I would like to thank Jerónimo Pizarro for drawing my attention and providing me access to this document from Pessoa's archive and Paulo Cardoso for offering me his comments on this image.

³ Pessoa possessed an edition from 1902 of the *Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* in his personal library which included this text, comprising a series of lectures on "Great Men" from different spheres of society as archetypal representatives of the philosopher, the mystic, the sceptic, the man of the world, the writer and the poet.

his poems. The system is grounded in astrology and, according to Miranda Hickman, the book's "second major ur-diagram" is: "'The Great Wheel', an analytical tool that traces and parses the paths taken by the individual soul and [...] that allows for the classification of people. From an individual's location among the twenty-eight 'phases' of 'The Great Wheel', one can extrapolate that individual's disposition, capabilities, limitations, and ambitions" (2005: 204). Both *A Vision* and Ezra Pound's *The Cantos* are considered to be "'metahistorical works' that reflect on the true history of the world as revealed in various obscure texts and in the careers of mythical and historical figures" (Surette, 1993: 40). They display "the 'modern' understanding of myth as a revelation, as mythopoeia" which, according to Leon Surette, derived from the Creuzerian tradition via Nietzsche (Surette, 1993: 184). This belief was also shared by Pessoa, as attested by his writings about the Portuguese prophetic tradition, notably on *Bandarra*, *Sebastianism and the Fifth Empire*, and by *Mensagem*, which features a gallery of mythical and representative *personae* from Portuguese history depicted as archetypes of national historical-prophetic cycles.

Pessoa's depiction of the figure of the poet as (apprentice) mage in "The Circle" recurs in a 1930 Portuguese poem with a similar theme and tone, "O Último Sortilégio" [The Last Spell], in which the *persona* of a sorceress transforms herself into a statue of living flesh, attaining immortality through an act of magic. This poem, with its metaphor of artistic practice as a form of alchemical transmutation has its counterpart in Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium" (1927), in which the poet *persona* prophesies his posthumous transformation into a gilded bird, enacting the "Great Work" of the alchemists. In both instances, as I argue elsewhere, the poets drew inspiration from Rosicrucian sources (McNeill, 2013: 165-66). In turn, "Pound shared with Yeats [...] a fascination with alchemy as an analogue of poetic art' and, as Timothy Materer observes, his "conception of 'the master of the soul' as poet as well as magus" betrays the influence of Yeats (1995: 56). This influence is particularly noticeable in Pound's early lyrics, as evinced by "the use of a *persona* who seeks or possesses mysterious spiritual power", notably in "The Alchemist" (1915), subtitled "Chant for the Transmutation of Metals" (Materer, 1995: 51). Despite their common interest in alchemy, they differed in that Yeats embraced Blavatsky's Eastern-influenced Theosophical strain and engaged in psychical research whereas Pound tended towards that of G. R. S. Mead, founder of the Quest Society, which "privileged the wisdom-element in the great religions and philosophies of the world" (Materer, 1995: 49).⁴

⁴ Pessoa had an edition of Mead's *Quests Old and New* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913), which displays numerous markings and annotations, notably on gnosis through self-discovery. See: Pizarro, Ferrari and Cardiello (2010), *A Biblioteca Particular de Fernando Pessoa*. See also the website: <<http://casafernandopessoa.cm-lisboa.pt/bdigital/index/index.htm>>.

Accordingly, geometric symbols, “gave both Pound and Yeats the means of expressing their sense of a divine pattern in the world” (Materer, 1995: 46), recalling Pessoa’s claim that geometric “figures are the external signs of the order and destiny of the world” in the first quotation from “Way of the Serpent” and that the circle contains “complex formulas of Law” which rule Change in “The Circle”. The primacy of geometry in the works of these authors illustrates its “significance as “the archetype of modern mind” that epitomises the modern devotion to “taxonomy, classification, inventory” and “catalogue” [...] – the modern “quest for order””, according to Zygmunt Bauman (*apud* Hickman, 2005: 13). In turn, T. E. Hulme, whose writings on aesthetics significantly influenced Yeats and Wyndham Lewis for instance, notes that “pure geometrical regularity gives a certain pleasure to men troubled by the obscurity of outside appearance. The geometrical line is something distinct from the messiness, the confusion, and the accidental details of existing things”, envisaging “the contemporary surge in geometric art” as signalling “something about the ‘disharmony or separation between man and nature’”, according to T. E. Hulme’s *Speculations* and “emerging from an attitude of estrangement from the world” (Hickman, 2005: 17-18, 16). This would certainly apply to all three poets who, becoming increasingly disappointed by political developments in their countries and across Europe, sought solace in geometry’s ordered universe. Like Pessoa’s, Yeats’s and Pound’s use of geometric imagery belongs to the realm of sacred or “mystic geometry” (as Yeats refers to *A Vision* in a letter to Lady Gregory; (Hickman, 2005: 201), and is encapsulated in Yeats’s expression “stylistic arrangements of experience” in the Introduction to *A Vision* (Yeats, 1981 [1937]: 25).

The sphere was a significant geometric figure for Yeats. In *A Vision*, he claims that “the ultimate reality [...] is symbolised as a phaseless sphere”, adding that “[a]ll things are present as an eternal instant to our *Daimon* (or *Ghostly Self* as it is called, when it inhabits the sphere), but that instant is of necessity unintelligible to all bound to the antinomies” (Yeats, 1981 [1937]: 193), by which he means those caught in human experience which in his system is symbolised by “the Great Wheel”. Neil Mann argues that in this passage Yeats is alluding to “the concept of God as a sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere, [which] can be traced to Hermetic and medieval sources” (2012b: 161-163). Noting that “Yeats had used the formulation in “In the Serpent’s Mouth” (1906)”, Mann proposes (2012b: 185) as a possible source M. Blavatsky, who quoted it in *The Secret Doctrine*, adding that it corresponded to “the symbolical circle of Pascal and the Kabbalists” (Blavatsky, 1888: I, 65). Significantly, in *A Vision* Yeats substitutes the word “God”, which he was reluctant to use because of its misconceptions, for “reality”, a term which was favoured by the Theosophist Franz Hartmann (Mann, 2012b: 161). In the aforementioned esoteric text about the “Way of the Serpent”, Pessoa refers to a “serpentine figuration – that of the snake in a circle, biting its tale

with the mouth”, which he claims to reproduce “the circle, symbol of the earth or of the world such as it is” or, as stated in another fragment, “Reality” (in Centeno, 1985: 30-31). Pessoa is here alluding to the motif of the alchemical *ouroboros*, the self-devouring dragon which symbolises the circular movement of the alchemical process (Moffit, 1995: 264), to which the title of Yeats’s 1906 essay above also alluded. Moreover, Pessoa appears to associate the circle both with the earthly reality, similarly to Yeats’s wheel of incarnation, and with the “ultimate reality” (as suggested by his use of the capital R), which Yeats also represents as a sphere.

The representation of the circle as a twofold symbol of divine and earthly reality in Pessoa’s poetry appears in a cryptic poem from 1931, where it is depicted as a sunflower, a circular natural form which is endowed with transcendental symbolism:

Guardo ainda, como um pasmo
Em que a infancia sobrevive,
Metade do entusiasmo
Que tenho porque já tive.

[...]

Girassol do falso agrado
Em torno do centro mudo
Falla, amarelo, pasmado
Do negro centro que é tudo.

Like an astonishment in which
Childhood survives, I still keep
Half the enthusiasm
I possess because I once did so.

[...]

Sunflower of false pleasure,
Around a mute centre
Yellow and astonished, speaks
Of the black centre that is everything.

(Pessoa, 2004: 53; my translation)

In the closing stanza, which acts as the key to the poem, the *persona* metaphorically identifies himself with the sunflower whose path around the Sun symbolically represents the circular movement of his thought around a “centre that is everything”, evoking Shelley’s conceptualisation of poetry as the “circumference of knowledge” (Shelley, 1977: 503). The centre which is everything represents the divine in accordance with the aforesaid concept of “God as a circle, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere”, with which Pessoa could have become familiar through Blavatsky, whose *The Voice of Silence* he translated in 1916, or possibly through Emerson, who also referred to Saint Augustine’s mystical concept in his works (Tuchman, 1995: 42; footnote 8). However, the fact that the sunflower orbits a centre whose core is “mute and black” signifies that knowledge of the divine is continuously deferred. The failure of the sunflower to encircle the centre matches Blavatsky’s statement that deity “is a sphere, without circumference” in *The Key to Theosophy* (1889: 64-65). Despite being aware that revelation will always elude him, the *persona* maintains a commitment to the quest for it analogous to that of Alexander Search in “The Circle” and a sense of bewilderment which he compares to the astonishment of a child.

The circle also recurs in Pound’s *The Cantos*, notably in these lines:

I have brought the great ball of crystal;
 who can lift it?
 Can you enter the great acorn of light?
 But the beauty is not the madness
 Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me. And I am not a demigod,
 I cannot make it cohere.

(Canto 116 in Surette, 1993: 137)

In this stanza the poet also depicts the sphere as symbol of the divine and as means of access to the knowledge of all things. However, the *persona* of the magus who carries the magic ball of crystal is also unable to make his vision form a coherent whole, thereby signifying the impossibility of delimiting the divine. According to Surette, “[t]hese lines are not, however, a confession of failure; rather, they are an effort to stipulate just what a successful Poundian paradiso would be” (1993: 137). He corroborates this claim with “Pound’s vision in *The Pisan Cantos: Le Paradis n’est pas artificiel* | but *spezzato* apparently | it exists in fragments [...]” (Surette, 1993: 188), which replaces Baudelaire’s consoling escapism with a sobering acceptance of the intermittent quality of human transcendence.

Pound’s depiction of knowledge or experience of the divine as fragmentary finds a counterpart in Pessoa’s “*Deixo ao cego e ao surdo*” [To the Blind and Deaf I Leave] which also claims the intermittency of divine immanence:

Deixo ao cego e ao surdo
 A alma com fronteiras,
 Que eu quero sentir tudo
 De todas as maneiras.

To the blind and deaf I leave
 The soul with boundaries,
 For I try to perceive
 All every way there is.

Do alto de ter consciencia
 Contemplo a terra e o ceu,
 Vejo-os ter existencia:
 Nada que vejo é meu.

From the height of being aware
 I contemplate earth and sky –
 I watch them existing
 Nothing I see is mine.

Mas vejo tam attento
 Tam nelles me disperso
 Que cada pensamento
 Me torna já diverso.

But I see so alertly,
 Disperse myself in them so
 That each thought turns me
 Diverse at a blow.

E como são estilhaços
 Do ser, as coisas dispersas
 Quebro a alma em pedaços
 E em pessoas diversas.

And just as things are splinters
 Of being, and are dispersed,
 I break the soul to slivers
 And into different persons. [...]

Assim a Deus imito,
 Que quando fez o que é
 Tirou-lhe o infinito
 E a unidade até.

God, therefore, I imitate –
 Who, when He made all,
 Removed from it the infinite
 And unity as well.

(Pessoa, 2001: 199-200)

(Pessoa, 1982: 37-38)

This poem illustrates the link between Pessoa's sensationist poetics and his theory of depersonalisation, which resulted in the heteronyms, and the hermetic principle of the multiplicity and interconnectedness of the divine, which he expounds in another excerpt from the esoteric text "Way of the Serpent": "Everything is triple, but the triple being of each thing consists in three grades or layers – one low, another medium, another high. Everything which takes place in a layer is reflected and features in another. This is the fundamental principle of all secret science, and it was thus represented by Hermes Trismegistos in the formulation 'that which is above is the same as below, and that which is below is as that which is above'" (in Centeno, 1985: 31-32; my translation). This passage describes the triple logos and the law of correspondences between the superior and inferior worlds underpinning esoteric thought in its many manifestations. In the same text, Pessoa depicts these principles geometrically through the figure of a complex triangle: "If we represent the whole scheme of this by two equilateral triangles on the same base, each, so to speak, opposite to the other, we shall obtain a clear idea, or an idea as clear as possible, of the method of attainment. God, apex of the upper triangle, opens out into the base, and the base narrows down into the castdown apex of the lower triangle. From the apex of the lower triangle there is ascent into the base-line of both: thus the descent of God is repeated upwards, and, at the same time, there is ascent towards God" (in Centeno, 1985: 77; my translation). He not only describes the geometric figure, but also draws a diagram of it to illustrate this passage of an "Essay on Initiation":

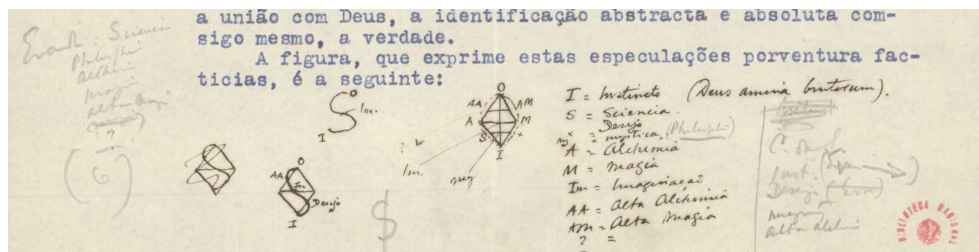


Fig. 3. BNP/E3, 54A-4.

This diamond-shaped figure, which in Euclidean geometry is known as a rhombus or equilateral quadrilateral, is also known in sacred geometry dating back to the Pythagoreans as *vesica piscis*, symbolising the intersection of the material and the spiritual worlds. Pessoa would have likely read about the symbolism of the diamond-shaped *vesica piscis* in Jennings's *The Rosicrucians* (1907: 135, 245-246). In his diagram, the *vesica piscis* circumscribes the way of the serpent, described as the ascension from Instinct (Human Consciousness) to Identity (Spiritual Consciousness) through various grades that include Art, Magic and Alchemy. Its zig-zag pattern across the *vesica* corresponds to the upward path of the initiate from material existence reaching back up towards the divine in the Hermetic Kabbalah. Pessoa was acquainted with the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, which in

Hermetic Kabbalah is said to enclose the *vesica piscis*, through MacGregor Mathers' *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (plaque between 28-29) and Aleister Crowley's 777, of which he owned copies. His esoteric notes show that he was also familiar with the Rosicrucian-inspired Scottish Masonic rite and that of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia through his reading of works by A. E. Waite (1924: 453).⁵ This knowledge extended to Rosicrucian initiatory orders like the Golden Dawn and the Silver Star whose initiation rituals and grades re-enacted the Kabbalistic way of the serpent, about which he read in Crowley's *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929: 231&ff). This book would have also acquainted him with the teachings of the Golden Dawn with which, according to Marco Pasi, the order of the *Argenteum Astrum* (A.:A.:), founded by Aleister Crowley and George Cecil Jones after they left the Golden Dawn, "shared much of its structure" except for "some differences in the initiatory grades" (Pasi, 2001: 701).

Like Pessoa, Yeats also subscribed to a tripartite principle underlying divine manifestation and what he called the "antinomy of the One and the Many", stating in the introduction to his and John Ellis's multi-volume edition of William Blake's works that the "central mood in all things is that which creates all by affinity – worlds no less than religions and philosophies. First, a bodiless mood, and then a surging thought, and last a thing. [...] In Theosophical mysticism we hear of the triple logos – the unmanifest eternal, the manifest eternal, and the manifest temporal; and in Blake we will discover it under many names, and trace the histories of the many symbolic rulers who govern its various subdivisions" (in Surette, 1993: 183). In the second book of *A Vision*, Yeats states that "[t]he whole system is founded upon the belief that the ultimate reality, symbolised as the Sphere, falls in human consciousness [...] into a series of antinomies" (1981 [1937]: 187). He represents these antinomies as swirling vortices or intersecting gyres, which are "frequently drawn as a double cone, the narrow end of each cone being in the centre of the broad end of the other" (Mann, 2012a: 6), or as overlaying triangles, the apex of one of which falls at the base of the other, as illustrated by the diagrams in the book:

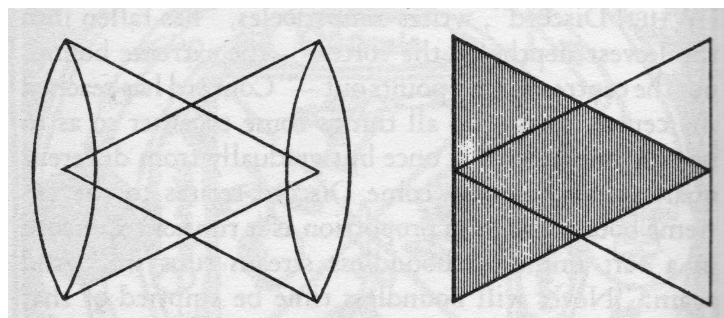


Fig. 4. Swirling vortices or intersecting gyres.

⁵ Pessoa also possessed an edition of Waite's *Emblematic Freemasonry*.

These figures “represent the trajectories described by individual souls as they move from life to death back to life, as well as by civilizations as they develop and decline”, and possess a “comprehensive explanatory power” since, in Yeats’s own words, he need only “set a row of numbers upon [their] sides to possess a classification [...] of every possible movement of thought and life” (Hickman, 2005: 203), as shown by the diagram of the historical cones that opens book V. However, as Mann observes, “Yeats is less concerned with the poles themselves than with the forces pulling in either direction – *towards* the One and *towards* the Many: the unifying and the dispersing, the centripetal and the centrifugal, the homogenizing and the differentiating, the objectifying and the subjectifying” (2002a: 5), which find expression in a poem like “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” (1929).

Yeats’s antinomy of the centripetal and the centrifugal is also dramatised in Pessoa’s poetry, notably in the sensationist odes of Álvaro de Campos. In “A Passagem das Horas” [Time’s Passage] (1916), his “Centrifuga ansia” (Pessoa, 1990: 159) [“Centrifugal yearning” (Pessoa, 1998: 149)] to “Sentir tudo de todas as maneiras” (Pessoa, 1990: 148) [“(feel) everything in every way” (Pessoa, 1998: 146)] is counterbalanced with a centripetal impulse, whereby “A raiva de todos os impetos fecha em circulo-mim!” (Pessoa, 1990: 162) [The rage of all impetuses closes in a me-circle!” (Pessoa, 1998: 152)]. Nonetheless, the centrifugal tendency towards expansion into the world is dominant in this poem and he concludes, “Transbordei, não fiz senão extravasar-me” (Pessoa, 1990: 149) [“I overflowed, I did nothing but spill out” (Pessoa, 1998: 147)]. The same yearning to “feel everything in every way” recurs in “Afinal, a melhor maneira de viajar é sentir” [After all, the best way to travel is to feel], but in this poem he is able to resolve the centripetal-centrifugal dichotomy, as claimed in the lines, “I am a formidable dynamism subject to the balance | Of being inside my body, of not overflowing from my soul” (my translation).⁶ He achieves this by becoming at once center and circumference of his own Self – i.e., akin to God – as described in the stanza:

My body is a center of an amazing and infinite wheel
 Circling itself in a continuous dizzying movement,
 Crossing in every direction with other wheels,
 That mingle and interpenetrate, because this is not in space
 But in a spatial unknown of another way to be God.

(My translation)⁷

⁶ “Sou um formidável dinamismo obrigado ao equilíbrio | De estar dentro do meu corpo, de não transbordar da minh’alma (Pessoa, 1990: 266).

⁷ “Meu corpo é um centro dum volante estupendo e infinito | Em marcha sempre vertiginosamente em torno de si, | Cruzando-se em todas as direcções com outros volantes, | Que se entrepenetram e misturam, porque isto não é no espaço | Mas não sei onde espacial de uma outra maneira-Deus” (Pessoa, 1990: 266).

The figure of the spinning wheel recurs in “Ode Marítima” [Maritime Ode] (1915) as a symbol of a dynamic imagination whose frenzied movement unsettles the inner balance attained in “Afinal a melhor maneira de viajar é sentir”:

The feverish machine of my teeming visions
 Now spins at such frightening, inordinate speed
 That my flywheel consciousness
 Is just a blurry circle whirring in the air.

(Pessoa, 2006: 183)⁸

Later on in the poem, he refers to his “flywheel consciousness” as a “slow whirlpool of divergent sensations” (2006: 189)⁹. The spiralling and interpenetrating movements of the wheels described in these two stanzas call to mind Yeats’s swirling vortices or gyres. Additionally, the “divergent sensations” comprising Campos’s vortex recall the antinomies of Yeats’s system.

The vortex also recurs in the works of Pound, who, like Yeats, “uses the image of the gyre or spiral as a general symbol of spiritual development but also to indicate his own spiritual progress. The gyre is a Yeatsian “winding stair” in the opening of Canto 16” (Materer, 1995: 42). Surette argues that Pound’s gyres were inspired by Allen Upward’s “‘whirl-swirl’ – the vortex, or funnel that is reported in many mystic visions of the other world”, claiming that Pound marked a passage on this topic in his “heavily marked copy of *The New Word*”, and that this concept “was adapted by Pound and Lewis for their Vorticist movement” (Surette, 1993: 137). The first issue of *Blast* (1914), the magazine of the London-based Vorticist movement, includes a text by Pound entitled “Vortex”, which opens with the statement, “The vortex is the point of maximum energy, It represents, in mechanics, the greatest efficiency” (*Blast* 1: 153; cf. Lewis). Pound’s description of the vortex matches Campos’s description of the wheel of consciousness as a “formidable dynamism” and “feverish machine” in the excerpts of the poems quoted above, in which the choice of epithets highlights its high performance and energy. Pessoa possessed both issues of *Blast*. It is, therefore, possible that he re-enacted the key tenets of Pound’s manifesto in Campos’s modernist poems as an homage to the British avant-garde and its praise of machinery (*Blast* 1: 39-40). As Reed Way Dasenbrock notes, “the Vorticists’ fusion – what Lewis called their “new synthesis” [...] – of what they regarded as the best elements of both Cubism and

⁸ “Com tal velocidade desmedida, pavorosa, | A máquina de febre das minhas visões transbordantes | Gira agora que a minha consciência, volante, | É apenas um nevoento círculo assobiando no ar” (Pessoa, 1990: 96).

⁹ The original line in Portuguese is “turbilhão lento de sensações desencontradas” (Pessoa, 1990: 102). Richard Zenith opted to translate the word “turbilhão” as “whirlpool” but it could equally be translated as vortex or swirl.

Futurism" meant that they adopted Futurism's "dedication to suggesting dynamic motion" (Dasenbrock, *Literary Vorticism*, quoted in Hickman, 2005: 5-6).

The syncretic amalgamation of aspects from contemporary movements by the Vorticists was matched by Pessoa's Sensationism, of which Campos is the major representative, and which, as stated by Pessoa in an explanatory text in English,

[...] differs from common literary currents in that it is not exclusive [...] it does not claim for itself that it is, except in a certain restricted sense, a current or a movement, but only partly an attitude, and partly an addition to all preceding currents.

The position of sensationism is not, as that of common literary movements, like romanticism, symbolism, futurism, and all such, a position analogous to that of a religion, which implicitly excludes other religions. It is precisely analogous to that which *theosophy* takes up in respect to all religious systems. It is a well-known fact that theosophy claims to be, not a religion, but the fundamental truth that underlies all religious systems alike.

(Pessoa, 2009: 155, my emphasis)

It is significant that Pessoa makes an analogy with theosophy in order to illustrate Sensationism's syncretism in the above passage. As was the case with many contemporary artists and writers, Pessoa's sacred geometry had common sources in contemporary esoteric doctrines, particularly in Theosophy. Vortices, gyres, and spheres appear in diagrams devised by the theosophists Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater in *Thought-Forms* (1905) to represent patterns on etheric matter caused by thoughts and feelings (Ringbom, 1995:147). Pessoa was familiar with this concept, having translated books by both authors which include references to thought-forms, notably Besant's *The Ideals of Theosophy* and Leadbeater's *Clairvoyance*.¹⁰ Leadbeater describes the type of clairvoyance "by the projection of a thought-form" as "the power to retain so much connection with and so much hold over a newly-erected thought-form as will render it possible to receive *impressions* by means of it. Such impressions as were made upon the form would in this case be transmitted to the thinker [...] by sympathetic *vibration*" (Leadbeater, 1903: 68, 67, my emphasis). This conception of thought-forms underpins Kandinsky's influential theory, expounded in *On The Spiritual in Art* (1912), that emotions are vibrations of the soul that can be represented visually. Kandinsky's book was partially translated by Edward Wadsworth in the first issue of *Blast* in view of its affinity with the ideas of the Vorticists, as acknowledged by Pound in his 1914 essay "Vorticism" (Hickman, 2005: 16). Therefore, *Blast* was an indirect source for Pessoa's reception of contemporary theories of art inspired by Theosophical concepts, as attested by the fact that Lewis's "Review of Contemporary Art" in the second issue of the magazine displays some markings in Pessoa's copy, some of

¹⁰ See reference to thought-forms in Besant, *The Ideals of Theosophy* (1912: 100). See reference to thought-forms in Leadbeater, *Clairvoyance* (1903 43, 67&ff). Pessoa had the third edition of this book, from 1908, in his library.

which concern Kandinsky. The geometric shape was increasingly used as a vehicle for the nonrepresentational impulse in the visual arts argues Maurice Tuchman, claiming that “Italian Futurism, too, had a role in the spiritual-abstract nexus” (1995: 41-42). According to him, “[n]onreferential paintings, such as Giacomo Balla’s *Iridescent Interpenetration*, 1914, and Gino Severini’s *Spherical Expansion of Light* series of 1913-14, would not have led to the dissolution of materiality without influence from spiritualism” and “[w]hen Bragaglia concluded in *Fotodinamismo Futurista* (1911) that his ultimate intention was to express “reality as vibration,” he was proclaiming a manifesto-like declaration of hermetic ideas” (Tuchman, 1995: 41-42).

Besant and Leadbeater’s fusion of the Buddhist “notion of vibration as a force producing all the shapes of the visible as well as the invisible world” with “Western occult speculation that was based on the perfectly respectable scientific investigations by Ernst Chladni”, which underpinned their experiments with music and colour parallels, illustrate the mixture of esotericism and science informing Theosophy (Ringbom, 1995: 147). This type of association is also present in the works of contemporary artists and writers who were influenced by these esoteric theories. Accordingly, Wyndham “Lewis’s use of the vortex, in both paintings and writing, was informed by his understanding of new developments in electrical field theory”, as attested by “*Energetics of Tarr*”, in which he “relates Lord Kelvin’s theory of vortex atoms to James Clerk Maxwell’s representation of a magnetic field ‘as an ethereal fluid filled with rotating vortex tubes, whose geometrical arrangement corresponded to these force-lines’” (Hickman, 2005: 22, 260-261). According to Hickman, “Pound also showed himself influenced by the discourse of electromagnetism, his familiarity with which may have influenced his notion of the vortex”, while associating closely with “members of the Theosophical Quest Society – which often featured a mixture of scientific and mystical thought, and which, more importantly, accented geometric patterns in its work” (Hickman, 2005: 22). This was a likely source for Pound’s claim in “*The Wisdom of Poetry*” (1912) that “What the analytical geometer does for space and form [...] the poet does for the states of consciousness” (Hickman, 2005: 1). Similarly, “Lewis describes Vorticism as ‘a mental-emotive impulse’ that ‘is let loose upon a lot of blocks and lines’” (Lewis quoted in Hickman, 2005: 118), likewise emphasising geometric patterns.

Pessoa also uses a geometric vocabulary to describe the analysis of mental-emotive states of consciousness underpinning Sensationism in a fragment in English, wherein he claims that:

Every sensation (of a solid thing) is a solid body bounded by planes, which are inner images (of the nature of dreams – two dimensioned), bounded themselves by lines (which are ideas, of one dimension only). *Sensationism pretends, taking stock of this real reality, to*

realise in art a decomposition of reality into its psychic geometrical elements.¹¹ [...] The end of art is simply to increase human self-consciousness. [...] The more we decompose and analyse into their psychic elements our sensations, the more we increase our self-consciousness.

(Pessoa: 2009: 153)

Like Lewis, Pessoa uses geometric terminology of planes and lines to underline the formal aspect of his aesthetic, which in its goal of decomposing reality resembles both Vorticism and its model, Cubism, and in its reference to “psychic elements” betrays a spiritual bias comparable to that identified by Tuchman as underlying Kandinsky’s Expressionism, Vorticism, and Futurism. That these movements were foremost in his mind when he wrote the latter is corroborated by the fact that he refers to two of them further ahead in the same text, “Cubism, futurism, end [sic] kindred schools, are wrong applications of intuitions which are fundamentally right. The wrong lies in the fact that they attempt to solve the problem they suspect on the lines of three-dimensional art; their fundamental error lies in that they attribute to sensations an exterior reality which indeed they have, but not in the sense the futurists and others believe” (Pessoa: 2009: 154). This statement not only proves that Pessoa was well acquainted with Cubism, Futurism and “kindred schools” such as Vorticism, but also shows his effort to distinguish Sensationism from these movements through the same process of “incremental self-differentiation” with which the Vorticists responded to contemporary movements such as Cubism and Futurism (Hickman, 2005: xviii).

The “solid body” that Pessoa ascribes to a sensation in the text quoted above is a cube, as stated in another fragment in English in which geometric imagery also abounds,

Contents of each sensation:

- a) sensation of the exterior universe.
- b) sensation of the object sensed at the time.
- c) objective ideas associated therewith.
- d) subjective ideas associated therewith (state of mind at the time).
- e) the temperament and mental basis of the senser
- f) the abstract phenomenon of consciousness.

Thus each sensation is a cube, which may be considered as set down upon the side representing F, having the side representing A upwards. The other sides are of course B, C, D and E.

Now this cube may be looked at in three manners:

- 1) on one side only, so that none of the others is seen;
- 2) with one side of a square held parallel to the eyes, so that two sides or the cube are seen;
- 3) with one apex held in front of the eyes, so that three sides are seen.

¹¹ The editorial notes indicate that Pessoa’s emphases in this passage was typed in red ink, thereby highlighting the importance of this statement.

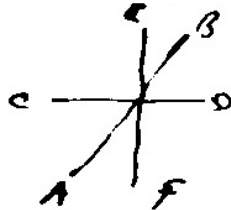
From an objective standpoint, the Cube of Sensation is composed of:
 Ideas = lines
 Images (internal) = planes
 Images of objects = solids

(Pessoa: 2009: 152-153)

Pessoa's summary of the contents of each sensation, comprising the six sides of a cube, includes subjective elements such as state of mind and temperament. By considering this to be an internal reality, argues Pessoa, Sensationism differs from Cubism and Futurism, which, as stated in the previous text, attribute to sensations solely an exterior reality reliant on a three-dimensional perspective.

Pessoa's description of the three manners in which the "Cube of Sensation" can be visualised in the excerpt above corresponds to the first, second and third dimensions. However, to these Pessoa adds a fourth dimension on which he elaborates in a fragment in Portuguese, in which he defines Sensationism as "a arte das quatro dimensões" [the art of the four dimensions] (Pessoa: 2009: 149). Following a syllogistic reasoning, he begins by stating that "quando se trata de material especial" [as far as spatial matter is concerned], "[a]s cousas teem aparentemente [...] 3 dimensões" [things apparently have three dimensions], only to argue that "se as cousas existem como existem apenas porque nós assim as sentimos, segue que a 'sensibilidade' (o poder de serem sentidas) é uma quarta dimensão d'ellas" [if things exist as they do only because we feel them as such, it follows that "sensitivity" (the power for them to be felt) is a fourth dimension of theirs] (Pessoa: 2009: 149). He then proceeds to illustrate the three dimensions as perceived through the fourth dimension of "sensitivity", whose subjective perspective differs from the visible spatial dimensions, through the following diagram and accompanying explanation:

Supposing an observer placed in A,



we find that he will see everything around three perceptions:

AB = the line from the object to him.

CD = the line from side to side of the object.

EF = the line from top to bottom of the object.

(My translation)¹²

¹² "Supondo um observador colocado em A, [...] temos que ele verá tudo em volta de três percepções: | AB = a linha do objecto até ele. | CD = a linha de lado a lado do objecto. | EF = a linha de alto a baixo do objecto" (Pessoa: 2009: 149).

Pessoa's formulations of the three apparent dimensions in the previous fragment and of the three real dimensions as perceived through the "sensitivity" of the observer in this excerpt strikingly resemble Robert Browne's accounts of dimensionality and the fourth dimension in *The Mystery of Space* (1919), which displays syllogistic accounts and diagrams of lines, planes and solids, notably the tesseract or hypercube, a key figure of four-dimensional geometry (Browne, 1919: 5, 92&ff).¹³ This was a likely source of geometric imagery for Pessoa. Similarly, his claim that the end of art is "to increase human self-consciousness" by decomposing sensations into their "psychic elements" in the first excerpt resembles Browne's contention of "mental evolution" towards "higher consciousness" and his description of perception: "[w]hen the Thinker's consciousness is presented with a neurograph of say, a cube, it is not the cube itself which he contemplates or observes; it is the neurograph or psychic symbol which the sense-impressions make in the brain" (1919: 189-190). Browne's book addresses what Linda Dalrymple Henderson has called "hyperspace philosophy", which "presented the fourth dimension as the true reality that can be perceived by means of higher consciousness. The principle exponents of hyperspace philosophy were the Englishman Charles Howard Hinton, author of *A New Era of Thought* (1888) and *The Fourth Dimension* (1904); the American architect Claude Bragdon in *A Primer of Higher Space* (1913) and *Four Dimensional Vistas* (1916); and the Russian philosopher, occultist [...] P. D. Ouspensky particularly in his books *The Fourth Dimension* (1910), *Tertium Organum* (1911) and *A New Model of the Universe* (1931) (Galbreath, 1995: 373). Pessoa also read about "the fourth dimension of space" in Claude Bragdon's *Four Dimensional Vistas*, one of the works listed by Henderson in the passage above as propounding hyperspace philosophy (Bragdon, 1923: 15-16).¹⁴

Another likely source of information on this subject is *Clairvoyance*, which Pessoa translated in 1916. Leadbeater refers to Hinton and his concept of "the tesseract or fourth-dimensional cube" and equates the fourth dimension with "astral sight", describing it thus:

Or if you were looking etherically at a wooden cube with writing on all its sides, it would be as though the cube were glass, so that you could see through it, and you would see the writing on the opposite side all backwards, while that on the right and left sides would not be clear to you at all unless you moved, because you see it edgewise. But if you looked at it astrally you would see *all the sides at once*, and all the right way up, as though the whole cube had been flattened out before you, and you would see every particle of the inside as well - not through the others, but all flattened out. You would be looking at it from another direction, at right angles to all the directions that we know.

(Leadbeater, 1903: 36, 39; my emphasis)

¹³ Pessoa had a copy of this edition in his library, which displays markings.

¹⁴ Pessoa had a copy of the second edition, from 1922, in his library.

The claim that astral vision allows the subject to see all sides of the cube at once in this excerpt recalls the second line of Campos's "A Passagem das Horas" (subtitled "Sensationist Ode"), "Viver tudo de todos os lados" (Pessoa, 1990: 148). ["To live everything from all sides" (Pessoa, 1998: 146)]. Pessoa's choice of the Portuguese term "lados" [sides] suggests the shape of a solid which is likely the "Cube of Sensation", given the articulations between this poem and his aesthetic texts on this matter. In *Clairvoyance*, Leadbeater also alludes to Sir Oliver Lodge, a nineteenth-century English physicist who conducted research on electromagnetism and on Spiritualism, quoting his address to the British Association, in which he elaborates on "a possible fourth dimensional aspect about time" and states that "if we once grasp the idea that past and future may be actually existing, we can recognize that they may have a controlling influence on all present action, and the two together may constitute the "higher plane" or totality of things" (Leadbeater, 1903: 125).

The temporal aspect of the fourth dimension features in the fragment on Sensationism as "The art of the fourth dimension", to which Pessoa ascribes three axioms,

1. The only reality is sensation.
2. The maximum reality will be attained by feeling everything in every way (in all times).
3. For that one needed to be *everything* and *everyone*.

(My translation.)¹⁵

These maxims echo in the following lines from "A Passagem das Horas":

To be the same thing in all ways possible at the same time,
 To realize in oneself all humanity at all moments
 In one scattered, extravagant, complete and aloof moment.

(Pessoa, 1998: 146)¹⁶

The subsumption of all space and time into a single moment described in these lines reflects the concept of the fourth dimension as the domain of the infinite and eternal underpinning hyperspace philosophy but also suggests that Pessoa was familiar with contemporary scientific theories about the four-dimensional space-time continuum.

The notion of space-time coexistence recurs in a text which begins with the statement, "According to António Mora (*Prolegómenos*, chap. 3)", and therefore ostensibly conveys the opinion of the philosopher-heteronym in his *magnum opus*,

¹⁵ "1. A única realidade é a sensação. | 2. A máxima realidade será dada sentindo tudo de todas as maneiras (em todos os tempos). | 3. Para isso era preciso ser tudo e todos" (Pessoa, 2009: 149).

¹⁶ "Ser a mesma coisa de todos os modos possíveis ao mesmo tempo, | Realizar em si toda a humanidade de todos os momentos | Num só momento difuso, profuso, completo e longínquo." (Pessoa, 1990: 148-149)

in a clear effort on Pessoa's part to assign authority to his claims. The fragment includes the following schematic diagrams:

1 dimension	– dot	– reality	– soul
2 dimension	– line	– movement (time)	– feeling
3 dimension	– plane	– space	– representation
4 dimension	– figure	– space-time	
5 dimension	–		

[...]

Dot	Reality	Consciousness (or soul)
Line	Time	Sensation (consciousness in a sense)
Plane	Space	Representation
Figure	Time-space	
Body	Coexistence	

(My translation)¹⁷

Referring to these diagrams, Paula Cristina Costa and Manuel Anes argue that, in attempting to devise a syncretic aesthetic that would gather all the *isms*, Pessoa based himself on Minkowski's and Einstein's discoveries to reformulate the relations between space and time by privileging time over space (Costa, Anes, 1998: 257-58).

Their claim is corroborated by the fact that Pessoa possessed a book about Einstein's theory of Relativity, which included references to simultaneity and Minkowski's concept of space-time (Brose, 1920: 20).

The deployment of contemporary scientific and pseudo-scientific theories in the domain of aesthetics was not exclusive to Pessoa. The Cubists were considerably interested in the fourth dimension, as illustrated by "the Cubism of Picasso and Georges Braque", which, as Henderson notes, "had achieved a suggestion of higher dimensions by denying a clear reading of three-dimensional space and objects" (Henderson, 1995: 225). She highlights Max Weber's *Camera Work* article, "The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View" (1910), and Guillaume Apollinaire's discussion of the subject in "La Peinture nouvelle: Notes d'art" (1912) and subsequently in *Les Peintres Cubistes* (1913) (Henderson, 1995: 220). However, this concept is not that of Minkowski's space-time and Einstein's Relativity, since these discoveries were not publicised until 1916, but that of hyperspace philosophy (Henderson, 1971: 427). This is corroborated by the fact that "Apollinaire in his 1912 article described the fourth dimension as [...] 'space itself, the dimension of the infinite'", which, as Henderson notes, strikingly resembles

¹⁷ "1 dimensão – ponto – realidade – alma | 2 dimensão – linha – movimento (tempo) – sentimento | 3 dimensão – plano – espaço – representação | 4 dimensão – figura – espaço– tempo | 5 dimensão – [...] Ponto Realidade Consciência (ou alma) | Linha Tempo Sensação (consciência num sentido) | Plano Espaço Representação | Figura Tempo–espaço | Corpo Coexistência" (Lopes, 1990: II, 294).

Blavatsky's description of the *anima mundi* as being "space itself, only shoreless and infinite" in *Isis Unveiled* (1877) (Henderson, 1995: 220).

Pseudo-scientific and occult theories were also influential on the legacy of Cubism and Futurism in Russia. Tuchman argues that "popularized beliefs about n-dimensional geometry were an essential basis for the Russian Futurist movement and the art of Malevich", whose "[s]uprematist works were intended to represent the concept of a body passing from ordinary three-dimensional space into the fourth dimension" (Tuchman, 1995: 36-37). Henderson notes that in his move from Cubo-Futurism to Suprematism, "Malevich replaced natural forms with a pure geometry that bears a striking resemblance to the language Bragdon utilized in *Man the Square* (1912) and *A Primer of Higher Space* (1913) to illustrate the relation of a lower dimension to the next higher dimension" (Henderson, 1995: 226). Another major source for the Russian Cubo-Futurists were the writings of the occultist philosopher P. D. Ouspensky, who claimed that "[i]n the fourth dimension [...] objects can be viewed from all sides at once" and described perception in the fourth and highest stage of "psychic and organic evolution" as: "A feeling of four-dimensional space. A new sense of time. The live universe. Cosmic consciousness. Reality of the infinite. A feeling of communality with everyone. The unity of everything. The sensation of world harmony. A new morality. The birth of a superman" (Henderson, 1995: 221, 187). Ouspensky's description of fourth-dimensional perception strikingly resembles Pessoa's formulations of Sensationism as the quest for all-encompassing and synchronous consciousness and coexistence, in his aesthetic and poetic texts.

However, in the fragment ostensibly expounding António Mora's philosophy, Pessoa goes a step further and proposes a fifth dimension, which he identifies with the body and equates with coexistence, implying that this would take the form of bodily coexistence. In the context of Pessoa's poetic universe this final and highest dimension would necessarily correspond to the fifth stage of poetic depersonalisation (as stated in another text which outlines five stages or degrees of lyric poetry) (Pessoa, 1967: 67-68), for which he coined the term heteronymy. That Pessoa regarded the creation of heteronyms as an ascension to a higher degree of consciousness which he equated with a dimension beyond that of three-dimensional reality is evident in an undated fragment written in English, in which he states: "The creation of Caeiro and of the discipleship of Reis and Campos seems, at first sight, an elaborate joke of the imagination. But it is not. It [is] a great act of intellectual magic, a *magnum opus* of the impersonal creative power. I need all the concentration I can have for the preparation of what may be called, figuratively as an act of intellectual magic – that is to say, for the preparation of a literary creation in a, so to speak, *fourth dimension* of the mind (Lopes, 1990: II, 294). The association between heteronymy, magic and the fourth dimension in this excerpt shows the synthesis of (pseudo)-scientific and occult

principles underpinning his conceptualisation of the fourth dimension, which resembles Weber's and Apollinaire's notion of the fourth dimension as "creative imagination" (Bohn, 2002: 23).

That Pessoa regarded this metaphorical act of intellectual magic as demiurgic is evident in this stanza from Campos's "Afinal, a melhor maneira de viajar é sentir":

The more I feel, the more I feel as several people,
 The more personalities I have,
 The more intensely, stridently I have them,
 The more simultaneously I feel with all of them,
 The more uniformly diverse, dispersedly alert,
 I am, feel, live, exist,
 The more I will possess the universe's total existence,
 The more complete I will be throughout the whole space.
 The more analogous I will be to God, whoever he is [...]

(My translation)¹⁸

By re-enacting the divine creative act through the creation of personalities, the subject overcomes "distinctions between the perceiving subject and the objects of the world" and attains the "unity of all things" celebrated in the Indian Upanishads and disseminated by the Theosophists (Henderson, 1995: 222), also known as "divine consciousness" in contemporary works about hyperspace philosophy like Browne's *The Mystery of Space* (Browne, 1919: 272).

As I hope to have shown in this essay, geometric imagery not only enriched the figurative expressiveness of Pessoa's orthonymous and heteronymous poetry but also played a crucial role in his formulation of a poetics of Sensationism. However, from this examination it has emerged that his use of geometric imagery needs to be considered in the context of the fascination with sacred geometry and exploration of its philosophical and aesthetic implications displayed by other major modernist writers, like Yeats and Pound, and by artists involved in important avant-garde movements in the first decades of the twentieth century such as Futurism, Vorticism, Cubism, Expressionism and Suprematism. Following from previous examinations in literary and cultural studies, the current study also demonstrated that this trend in Modernist art was generally accompanied by an interest in the occult bolstered by the link between esoteric ideas and science that informed influential esoteric movements such as Theosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

¹⁸ "Quanto mais eu sinta, quanto mais eu sinta como varias pessoas, | Quanto mais personalidades eu tiver, | Quanto mais intensamente, estridentemente as tiver, | Quanto mais simultaneamente sentir com todas ellas, | Quanto mais unificadamente diverso, dispersadamente attento, | Estiver, sentir, viver, fôr, | Mais possuirei a existencia total do universo, | Mais completo serei pelo espaço inteiro fóra, | Mais análogo serei a Deus, seja elle quem fôr" (Pessoa, 1990: 263).

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