

IMAGE AND MEANING IN VELAZQUEZ'S WATER-CARRIER OF SEVILLE *

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("La delicia de la pintura es sermos perpetuo Jeroglífico frente al cual vivimos constantemente, en una faena de interpretación, canjeando sin cesar lo que vemos por su intención."—José Ortega y Gasset.)

* A Julián Gállego, desde luego...

¹ *Arte de la pintura, / sv antigüedad, / y grandezas. / Describense los hombres eminentes / que ha auído en ella así antiguos como modernos...* Por Francisco Pacheco, / vezino de Seuilla. / Año de 1649. pp. 137.

² José LOPEZ-REY, *Velázquez: A Catalogue Raisonné of his Oeuvre, with an Introductory Study*, London, 1963, pág. 29.

³ Height. 1.07m.; Width 0.82m.; London, Apsley House, The Wellington Museum, no. 1600. There is a copy, in which the water-seller wears a cap, in the Conte Contini-Bonacossi Collection, Florence. "The Waterseller": LOPEZ-REY, catalogue nos. 124 and 125. "Istoria," as defined by Leon Battista Alberti (*Della Pittura*, ca. 1435), implied the employment — with figures — of themes drawn from ancient literature. "Istoria gives greater renown to the intellect than any colossus." The figures are to be so composed that their emotion will be accurately projected to the viewer. There is to be variety and richness in the painting, yet the painter must prudently exercise self-restraint in order to avoid excesses. Alberti urged the painter to a study of the gestures, and to the emotions enacted by gesture and expression, for it is only through a knowledge of the externals can we come to know the inner workings of the soul. I am certain that Pacheco was intimately familiar with Alberti's canonic text and this perhaps explains Pacheco's recollection of his best pupil's practice of the rendering of the extremes of human emotions: "Con ésta doctrina se crió my yerno, Diego Velázquez de Silva, siendo muchacho, el cuál tenía cohechado un aldeanillo aprendiz, que le servía de modelo en diversas acciones y posturas, ya lorando, ya riendo sin perdonar dificultad alguna." (*op. cit.*, libro 3^o, cap. 1^o, pág. 146).

I

The Sevillian master Francisco Pacheco was, as is well known, both Diego Velázquez's teacher and his father-in-law. In his *Arte de la Pintura* he makes it apparent that Velázquez's early fame had rested upon his success as a painter of *bodegones*; "What's that? *Bodegones* shouldn't be highly esteemed? They certainly ought to be, especially if they are painted as my son-in-law paints them, elevating his stature, without leaving a place for any other. They merit the greatest possible amount of estimation, as with these principles, and with his portraits, of which we shall speak later, he encountered the true imitation of nature, [thereby] nourishing the souls of the many by his powerful example."¹ Whereas the term *bodegón* presently connotes a "still-life" composition (*naturaleza muerta*) pure and simple, during the first decades of the 17th century it clearly meant a painting composed *with figures*.² In other words, during the period under discussion a *bodegón* was an "historiated" composition. In this light, *El Aguador de Sevilla* is a *bodegón*³ (figure 1).

Pacheco, in addition, adamantly states that "the aim of painting is in the service of God:... one purpose [of painting] is that of the work itself, another is that of the worker. Following the teaching [of the Church Fathers], I say that one aim is that of painting and another is that of the painter. The object of the painter —merely as a craftsman— is probably to gain wealth, fame, of credit by means of his craft... The object of the painter —as a Christian craftsman— (and it is he with whom we are here concerned), must have two purposes: one main aim and the other a secondary or consequent one. The

latter and lesser purpose would be the mere pursuit of his craft... The main purpose must be—through the study and toils of his profession, and being in a state of grace—to reach bliss and beatitude. This because a Christian, born for holy things, is not satisfied in his actions to have his eyes set so low that he only strives for human rewards and secular comforts. To the contrary, raising his eyes heavenward, he pursues a different aim, one much greater and more exquisite which is committed to eternal things... If we consider the three qualities discussed by the philosophers—namely the qualities of pleasure, usefulness and truth [i.e., *delectare, docere, et permovere*⁴]—we see that holy images encompass them all perfectly... Now as an act of virtue, [painting] acquires a new rich garment. In addition to being a likeness, it rises to a supreme goal, looking to eternal glory, and, endeavoring to keep men away from vices, it leads them to the true veneration of God, our Lord.”⁵

As Velázquez was a devoted and admiring pupil of Pacheco, it logically follows that *El Arte de la Pintura* informs us of the general outlines of the purpose of the *Aguador de Sevilla*. It is an instructive visual lesson, cloaked in the highest possible degree of realism (imitación), “committed to eternal things,” “trying to keep men from vices.” Thus a painting such as this one must have an edifying and Christian end. Its aesthetics are idealistic. The painter departs from his “*Idea*” which arises in his mind and carries it to his canvas. In this sense ostensible realism is nothing more than an indication of something ideal.⁶

The astute José Ortega y Gasset has noted that Velázquez “was taciturn in the extreme... He was uncommunicative. He was withdrawn... Velázquez was a genius in the matter of disdain. Few men have succeeded in disdaining so entirely, so naturally as Velázquez... No one was more adverse to publicity and intrigue. He lived aloof from all parties and cliques, something not at all easy in a palace... [Velázquez] gives an unsurpassable example of what is the fame of an artist or a writer when it is pure, that is, when he renounces publicity and intrigue.”⁷ In short, and above all, Velázquez was a prudent man. He was, additionally, the supreme exponent of that “*Arte para pocos*” so characteristic of the *Siglo de Oro*, which has been so brilliantly illuminated by the assiduous researches of Julián Gállego.⁸

The *Aguador de Sevilla* is, unquestionably, a masterpiece.

⁴ Literally translatable as: “to delight, to instruct, and so to thereby move the soul.” This triadic concept may be said to be the key-stone of Baroque aesthetics, and the *raison d'être* of 17th century illusionist practices. It was equally commonplace in the Protestant Netherlands: Jan G. VAN GELDER, “Two Aspects of the Dutch Baroque. Reason and Emotion,” *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, N.Y., 1961, pp. 445-53.

⁵ Pacheco, *op. cit.*, pp. 159ff.

⁶ Julián GALLEGO, *Velázquez en Sevilla*, Barcelona, 1974, pp. 56ff. Gállego's, to date, is the most intensive study of the penumbra which surrounds the painter's formative years, including his training under Pacheco.

⁷ *Papeles sobre Velázquez*, Madrid (Austral), 1963, pp. 19ff.

⁸ *Vision et Symboles dans la Peinture Espagnole du Siècle d'Or*, Paris, 1968.



1 - Velázquez: "El aguador de Sevilla". Wellington Museum, Londres. (Foto Archivo Mas).

Everything in it is magnificently and impeccably rendered. One can say of it, as Palomino said of his later masterpieces, "the figure painting (*"lo historiado"*) is superior, the conception (*"capricho"*) new, and in short it is impossible to over-rate this painting because it is *truth, not painting.*"⁹ Its impact is all the more impressive because of the simplicity of presentation. The iconographic elements are few but presented with stunning conviction and force. The water vendor, an elderly man of impoverished but noble appearance reverently offers exquisitely rendered glass goblet filled to the brim with crystalline water. In the glass is a fig. Behind the boy and the old man of impoverished but noble appearance, reverently offers still youthful appearance avidly drinks from another cup. Curiously, none of the actors in this muted drama is looking at any of the others, nor do they look at the chalice-like goblet; each lives in a silent world of his own reflective thoughts. At the same time as we delight in the scrupulous realism and sheer optical fascination of the *Aguador de Sevilla*, we are also impelled to take careful account of the complementary factors of the arrested posing, the carefully arranged and almost theatrical lighting, the deliberately staged and *tableau-vivant*-like quality of the ceremonial posing, and —above all— the art-oriented artificiality of the entire ensemble. Even if one was not aware of Pacheco's statement of the "goal of the Christian Painter," one should immediately be forced to the realization that the *Aguador de Sevilla* could not possibly represent a genre-study in the 19th century sense of the term.¹⁰

II

The history of this piece may be briefly summarized. It is especially significant, as Dr. Gállego has noted,¹¹ that this painting was *not* a commissioned piece. I must also agree with Dr. Gállego's shrewd observation that Velázquez must have taken this same painting with him on the occasion of his second trip to Madrid in the Spring of 1623, at which time he gained a Court appointment on the basis of his demonstrated talents. In this case, the *Aguador de Sevilla* was an independent composition by Velázquez —a *pièce d'ocassion*, as Gállego suggests— in which he would manifest both his skill in veristic painting (*imitación*), in addition to his not inconsiderable skills

⁹ Palomino was of course referring to *Las Meninas* (1656): "lo historiado es superior; el capricho, nuevo; y, en fin, no hay encarecimiento que iguale al gusto y diligencia de esta obra; porque es verdad, no pintura." Antonio PALOMINO DE CASTRO y VELASCO, *El Parnaso/Español/Pintoresco Laureado./ Tomo Tercero, etc.*, Madrid, 1724, 106, VII. (italics mine):

¹⁰ This erroneous "*veni, vidi, et pinxi*" interpretation of Velázquez's working methods was especially, and unfortunately, characteristic of the usually admirable CARL JUSTI, *Velázquez und sein Jahrhundert* Berlin, 1888 and 1903. It has been property taken to task by Leo Steinberg: re-view of LOPEZ-REY, *Velázquez's Catalogue Raisonné*, in "Art Bulletin", LXLVII/2, 1965, pp. 274ff.

¹¹ *Velázquez en Sevilla*, p. 83.

¹² José LOPEZ NAVIO. *Velázquez tasa los cuadros de su protector D. Juan de Fonseca*, "Archivo Español de Arte", XXXIV, 1961, pp. 64, 77.

¹³ PALOMINO, *op. cit.*, pp. 892-3: "la pintura que llaman del Aguador; el cual es un viejo muy al vestido, y con un sayo vil, y roto, que se le descubría el pecho, y vientre [sic] con las costras, y callos duros, y fuertes: y junto a si tiene un muchacho a quien da de beber. Y esta ha sido tan celebrada que se ha conservado hasta estos tiempos en el Palacio del Buen Retiro."

¹⁴ LOPEZ-REY, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-64.

in the creation of original and subtle content (*agudeza*). In short, the *Aguador de Sevilla* must have been conceived of by the aspiring artist as a one-painting portfolio representing his *Summa artis pictoribus*. The painting is first recorded as belonging to the painter's early admirer and protector, Don Juan Fonseca y Figueroa, Chaplain to Phillip IV, and a fellow Sevillian. Fonseca died on the 15th of January of 1627. On the 28th of the same month, Velázquez appraised the paintings in his late patron's collection. He put a value on the *Aguador de Sevilla* of 400 *reales*, thereby giving it a greater value than any others belonging to Fonseca.¹² It was promptly bought by Gaspar de Bracamonte. From his hands it passed into those of the Cardinal-Infante Fernando, the brother of Phillip IV.

The painting figured in the *Testamentaria de Carlos II*, drawn up after 1700, in which all of the late King's possessions were inventoried. Although Palomino described it somewhat inaccurately, he concluded by saying that this painting "had been so celebrated that it has been kept to this day in the Palace of the Buen Retiro."¹³ Around 1754 it was again reinstalled in the Palacio Nuevo, where it appears in the Royal Inventories of 1772 and 1794. Joseph Bonaparte, deposed Franch "King" of Spain, carried the painting away with him in his baggage trains upon the occasion of his precipitous flight from Madrid. He was shortly to be relieved of his ill-gotten gains at the Battle of Vittoria in 1813. The *Aguador de Sevilla* was then ceremoniously presented to the victorious Duke of Wellington by a grateful, and reinstalled, Ferdinand VII of Spain. It has since remained in the Duke's residence, Apsley House, The Wellington Museum, London.¹⁴

III

I had long been both fascinated and intrigued by the persistently enigmatic character of this splendid painting. How could one, with any sort of logic, accept the usual interpretation of this painting as "just" a genre-picture of an itinerant Sevillian water-vendor, nicknamed "The Corsican"? Such a question inevitably arises as, besides the purposive art-oriented artificiality of the ensemble discussed above, there is another glaring "false-note" to be seen. It is precisely the scrupulously rendered—and obviously costly—crystal goblet which the old

man tenders so ceremoniously to the youth. It calls attention to itself; it is the center of the composition as seen from the points or view either of formal alignments or of content-focus. Yet, surely such an expensive item could not have possibly formed part of the day-to-day equipment of a knockabout street vendor! It has always struck me as curious that no one has commented upon this anomaly, not even the most dedicated adherents to the traditional "genre" theory.

The chalice-like character of the crystal goblet logically suggests itself as a key to the riddle; I proceeded to work from it in isolating the iconographic elements, hopping to come up with a plausible explanation for the whole. I sought appropriate biblical citations to explicate the seemingly sacramental character of the painting. The man in the background drinks avidly: "O, taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:4) Water is a traditional symbol of cleansing and purification. As used in the baptismal rite, it symbolizes the washing away of sin and the rising to newness in life. It may also denote a striving for innocence, as in Pilate's handwashing gesture (Matthew 27:24), as well as Lady Macbeth's. It may also suggest a troubled soul: "Save us, O God, for the waters are come into my soul... I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me" (Psalm 69:1-2). Be that as it may, the predominant sense of water(s) is that: (1) it fertilizes; (2) it purifies; (3) it dissolves ("I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint." —Psalm 22:14).¹⁵ However, in the most useful sense, water is commonly recognized as the *fons et origo*—the fount and source of all human experience: that is, of knowledge itself. This interpretation of the specific meaning of the water in the chalice-like glass offered by the *Aguador de Sevilla* is complemented by the fig in the water which the glass contains; it is not employed here simply "to freshen the water," as some have supposed.¹⁶

And yet, the reader must admit, these suggestions are still too vague and generalized to be applicable to the specifics of the iconography of the *Aguador de Sevilla*. Especially, none of the biblical references at all accounts for the *three* personages of such distinctly differentiated ages. The glimmering of a final solution of the riddle was stated by Julián Gállego, whose astute observations exposed the error of the narrowly scriptural direction which I had so vainly been pursuing. He identifies the painting, on one level, as a "Meditation upon the Thirst of

¹⁵ In this context one recalls the "water-metaphors" symbolizing the four stages of ecstatic ascent and mystical "union" with Christ in the autobiography of St. Theresa of Avila.

¹⁶ For instance, LOPEZ-REY, *op. cit.*, p. 163: "The custom of freshening water by dropping a fig into the glass before drinking has not, I am told, entirely died out in Seville. The variety of fig used for this purpose due to its great sweetness is that known as *zafari* or *zahari*." The fig is commonly symbolic of the fateful Knowledge acquired after the Fall of Man; Adam and Eve learned modesty and accordingly covered their primeval nudity with sewn-together figleaves (Genesis 3:7). In such a case, the fig may serve as an alternative to the apple to stand for the Tree of Knowledge.

¹⁷ Velázquez en Sevilla, pp. 100, 132.

¹⁸ All of these varying numbers are encountered in Medieval writings: Fritz SAXI, *Illustrated Medieval Encyclopaedias*, "Lectures", London (Warburg Institute), 1957, pp. 228ff.

Knowledge." He described the old man, "full of interior nobility, of a profound melancholy; it is the head of the old man who possesses the source of Knowledge and he tenders his cup to the adolescent, while the man in the background drinks avidly... These two personages neither regard one another, nor do they look at the cup which is being passed from one hand to the other. One might say of them that they are submerged in an inexplicable meditation, in a profound gravity which gives such a religious air to a daily and vulgar act. If we take into account a third person, of an intermediate age between that of the two others, drinking eagerly between these two, we might be able to arrive at the conclusion that the proffered cup is like a rite of initiation for the adolescent, and thus the canvas represents "*The Three Ages of Man*": Old Age who is extending to Youth the Cup of Knowledge, although as yet of little use to Youth, while Maturity drinks [of the cup] with relish."¹⁷

While Gállego's interpretation is, of course, of immense importance—particularly for directing one into the realm of "secular" allegories—it still leaves unanswered some pertinent questions. On the one hand, one might rightly ask precisely what sort of "knowledge" is this which is being so reverently offered by Old Age. For another, one might well question the somewhat odd number of "three" for the Ages of Man. Could Velázquez have had in mind a more specific message that the rather generalized one implied by the Three Ages of Man? Could he have intended a moralizing message such as that advocated by his mentor Pacheco? While there is no doubt in my mind that Dr. Gállego's thesis, in its general implications, is quite correct, I must, however, specify the particulars of Velázquez's intended message.

According to tradition, the life of a man or a woman might be divided into not less than three ages, nor more than twelve. In the latter case, an analogy with the months of the year becomes apparent. Usually, however, the favored number was four, which neatly corresponded to, among other things, the Four Seasons, Four Temperaments, Four Elements, etc. In addition to four, five and six are also encountered, while three and seven are also common.¹⁸ The "Ages of Man," whatever its number, has an underlying significance akin to that of a *Vanitas* still-life: All mundane things are transient and must vanish *in ictu oculi*. Youth and beauty inevitably pass away

and in the end Death comes to us all. The "Three Ages" have been even represented by children at play, or young lovers, or, alternatively, by an old man either examining a skull or counting his money, or conversing with another.¹⁹ However, four is, again, the preferred number, as the span of human life is inexorably linked with the progress of the calendrical year. Hence the Four Ages equal the Four Seasons which in turn are linked to the concept of the Four Temperaments. These concepts were so rigidly intertwined that one may graphically represent them, following the Table of Equivalents drawn up by Antiochus of Athens:

¹⁹ James HALL, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, N.Y., 1974; also: *sub voce* "ages of Man"; cfr. "Ages of the World," "Four Temperaments," "Four Seasons," "Four Elements," etc.

²⁰ Antiochus' complete table of equivalences is found in Jean SEZNEC, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, N.Y., 1961, p. 47. The table dates from the 2nd century of the Christian era.

Ages fo Life	Seasons	Temperaments	Elements	Colors	Humors	Conditions
<i>Childhood:</i>	Spring	Sanguine	Air	Red	Blood	Hot-moist
<i>Youth:</i>	Summer	Choleric	Fire	Yellow	Yellow-bile	Hot-dry
<i>Maturity:</i>	Autumn	Melancolic	Earth	Black	Black-bile	Cold-dry
<i>Old Age:</i>	Winter	Phlegmatic	Water	White	Phlegm	Cold-moist ²⁰

IV

It will be my purpose in this paper to demonstrate that the *Aguador de Sevilla* is a personal emblem of Prudence and Good Counsel by Velázquez. On one level, it clearly deals with the traditional *topos* of "The Three Ages of Man," as Dr. Gállego discovered; they like those described by Isidore of Seville: "tres aetates, per quas mors hominem devorat, id est, infantiam, iuventutem et senectutem" (*Origines*, XI, 3, 33). Precisely because of the paintings art-oriented artificiality we have been invited to find in it that abstract and general significance—its "more-than-visual" meaning—which must lie behind its seductively concrete and particular spectacle of color and lines, light and shade, volumes and planes. Upon critical examination we find that this painting is an *emblem*, such as was defined in 1571 by Claude Mignault in his introduction to Alciati's *Liber Emblematum*: "les devises sont... composées de corps, d'âme et d'esprit: le corps est la peinture, l'esprit l'invention, l'âme est le mot." Thus we see that the Emblem will

²¹ Besides Gállego's excellent comments on emblematic imagery in Spain (*Vision et Symboles*), see also Mario Praz's fundamental study, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, Florence, 1975, which contains a complete bibliography of emblem-books published from the 16th century onwards. Also useful are: W. S. HECKSCHER, *Renaissance Emblems: Observations Suggested by Some Emblem-Books in the Princeton University Library*, "The Princeton University Library Chronical", XV, 1954, pp. 55ff., and Emile MALE, *La Clef des allegories peintes et sculptées au 17e et au 18e siècles*, "Revue des Deux Mondes," XXXIX, 1927, pp. 106ff and 375ff.

have some of the character of, respectively, the *symbol*—but it is a particular, rather than a universal, symbol; of the *puzzle*; of the *maxim*— but stated, of course, visually; and finally, it will partake of the nature of what might be called a "proverb-of-erudition."²¹

The content, if not the specific appearance, of Velázquez's paintings is best explained by a canvas from the hand of the painter most admired by Velázquez, Titian. The only "emblematic" painting ever produced by Titian is his *Allegory of Prudence* in the National Gallery in London, which has been dated ca. 1560-70 (figure 2). It visually paraphrases a maxim ("*le mot*") which is clearly stated in an inscription: "EX PRAETERITO/PRAESENS PRVDENTER AGIT/ NI FVTVRV(M) ACTIONEM DETVRPET"— (Instructed) by the



2 - Tiziano: "Alegoría de la Prudencia". National Gallery, Londres.

Past, the Present acts prudently lest the Future spoils (its) action.²² As Panofsky put it, “the picture, then, glorifies Prudence as a wise employer of the Three Forms of Life: the present learns from the past and acts with due regard to the future. And these three Forms of Time appear equated with the Three Ages of Man.”²³ As in Velázquez’s picture, we see the profile of a very old man, the full-face portrait of a man mature age in the center, and the profile of a beardless youth. The three faces, in addition to typifying Youth, Maturity, and Old Age—that is, the “Three Ages of Man”—are also meant to symbolize, as we are informed by the inscription, the Three Forms of Time in general: Future (Youth), Present (Maturity), and Past (Old Age). Titian also enjoins us to connect the three modes of time with the three psychological functions from which the virtue of Prudence arises: Foresight (Youth), which anticipates and provides for the Future; Intelligence (Maturity), which judges and acts in the Present; and Memory (Old Age), which remembers and has learned from the Past. This not uncommon concept was also visually expressed and labeled as such in a Quattrocento relief, ascribed to the School of Rossellino, entitled *PRVDENZA*, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (figure 3).

The triad of animal heads in Titian’s painting may be briefly explained as follows. They are due to the fortuitous discovery of Horapollo’s famous *Hieroglyphica* in 1419 which, as is well-known, was largely responsible for the veritable flood of emblem-books produced in the 16th and 17th centuries. The tricephalous creature here depicted, according to Horapollo, was an attribute of a prominent god in the hagiography of Hellenistic Egypt, Serapis. His monstrous companion bore on its shoulders the heads of a dog, a wolf, and a lion (figure 4). This *signum triceps* also came to light in Francesco Colonna’s immensely popular *Hypnerotomachia Polyphili*, published in 1499 (figure 5). The *tricipitum* was subsequently praised by Piero Valeriano as the perfect model of the “hieroglyph” (*Hieroglyphica, sive de Sacris Aegyptiorum aliarumque Gentium literis commentarii*, Basel, 1556, XXXII, “De tricipitio-Sol”).²⁴ The identification of the *signum triceps* as a symbol of Time (*Tempus*) is due to Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, early 5th century): “The lion’s head thus denotes the present... the past is designated by the wolf’s head because memory of things that belong to the Past is devoured... the image of the dog,

²² My discussion of Titian’s *Allegory of Prudence* and the significance and meaning(s) of the *signum priceps* is based upon materials to be found in the following studies: SEZNEC, *op. cit.*; Fritz SAXL and Erwin PANOFSKY, *A Late-Antique Religious Symbol in Works by Holbein and Titian*, “Burlington Magazine,” XLIX, 1926, pp. 177ff; R. PETTAZZONI, *The Pagan Origins of the Three-Headed Representation of the Christian Trinity*, “Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,” IX, 1946, pp. 135 ff; Edgar WIND, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, N.Y., 1968; Appendix 4, “The Trinity of Serapis,” pp. 259ss; Erwin PANOFSKY, *Titian’s Allegory of Prudence: A Postscript*, “Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History,” N.Y., 1955, pp. 146-68; Guy DE TERVARENT, *Attributes et symboles dans l’art profane: 1450-1600*, Geneva, 1958, *sub voce* “Trois têtes d’animaux”, 375-9; “Visages (trois),” 409-10.

²³ *Problems in Titian, Mostly Iconographic*, (Wrightsmen Lectures), N.Y., 1969, p. 103. I have come across a much earlier (ca. 1515-25) representation of the “Three Ages of Man” not mentioned by Panofsky. In the Palazzo Pitti in Florence (No. 110) there is a



3 - Escuela de Rosellino: “La Prudencia”. Victoria and Albert Museum, Londres.

painting of the “Scuola Veneta”, ascribed to Lorenzo Lotto, which depicts *Le tre età dell’Uomo*. A bald and bearded man is seen on the left side of the composition; on the right is a bearded man in his twenties. Both flank a youth who studies a page from a manuscript.

²⁴ A detailed history of the *signum triceps* is given by Erwin PANOFSKY, *Hercules am Scheidewege und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst*, (Studien der Bibliothek Warburg), Leipzig, 1930, pp. 1-35.

²⁵ MACROBIUS, *Saturnalia*, I, 20, 13ff: “vel dum simalacro signum tricripitis animantis adiungunt, quod exprimit medio eodemque maximo capite leonis effigiem; dextra parte caput canis exoritur mansueta specie blandientis, pars vero laeva cervicis rapacis lupi capite finitur, easque formas animalium draco conecit volumine suo capite redeunte ad dei dexteram, qua compescitur monstrum, ergo leonis capite monstratur praesens tempus, quia condicio eius inter praeteritum futurumque actu praesenti valida fervensque est. sed et praeteritum tempus lupi capite signatur, quod memoria rerum transactarum rapitur et auferitur. item canis blandientis effigies futuri temporis designat eventum, de quo nobis spes, licet incerta, blanditur.”



4 - El “Signum triceps”, compañero de Serapis. (L. Bergerus, *Lucernae... iconicae*, Berlín, 1702.

trying to please, signifies the outcome of the future, of which hope, although uncertain, always gives us lasting pleasure.”²⁵ The association of the *signum triceps* with *Prudentia*, in addition to *Tempus*, is due to Fabius Fulgentius Planiades (*Fulgentius metaforalis*, end of the 5th century), in which we are informed that Prudence is composed of three faculties – *Memoria*, *Intelligencia*, and *Praevidentia*, whose respective functions are to conserve the Past, to know the Present, and to foresee the Future: “Tripartita perlustrat tempora vitae.” On the other hand, this tripartite division of Prudence – stated as *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *providentia* – had its (literally) *locus classicus* in Cicero (*De inventione*, II, 53). The conjoining of the three-headed representation of Prudence to what we might call the proto-conceptualization of the artist is due to Petrarch who, in the third canto of his epic poem *Africa* (1338), substituted Serapis by *Apollo*, Leader of the Muses, and God of Poets, and hence, according to tradition, director of the arts in general: “Proximum imberbi specie crinitis Apollo... canem... lupum... leo... serpente... *fugientia tempora signant*” (*Africa*, III, 156-62). Valeriano’s *Hieroglyphica*, therefore, employed the tricripitum in two instances: once as an emblem of Prudence (XVI, “Serpens. Prudentia”), and again as an attribute of Apollo (XXXII, “De tricripitio-Sol”). (fig. 6). The potency of the conjoined Petrarchian conceit well into the Late Renaissance may be illustrated by a handsome print designed by Giovanni Stradano, “Apollo-Sol Accompanied by the *Signum Triceps*”. (Fig. 7).

By the time Cesare Ripa published his immensely influential *Iconologia* (1593, first illustrated edition in 1603) the mysterious three-headed attribute of Serapis-Apollo had been firmly established as a moral hieroglyph or emblem (figure 8). In addition to signifying the three parts of *Tempus* and *Prudentia*, it acquired that particular virtue which Aristotle had called “*enbonlíá*” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1142B), which Ripa translated as “*buon consiglio*” (*Consilium*). This can, in turn, be traced to the widely-read “Lives of the Philosophers” by Diogenes Laertius (*De vitis, dogmatibus et apophthegmatibus clarorum philosophorum*, III, 71), according to whom “wise counsel” (Greek, “*sumboullía*”) must take into account the Past, which provides precedents; the Present, posing the problem(s) at hand; and the Future, which holds in abeyance the consequences for Good (or Bad) Counsel. These arguments were simpli-

fied and condensed by Dante (*Convivio*, IV, 27): “dalla Prudenza vengono i boni consigli.”

In the *Iconologia*, the personification of Good Counsel is an elderly and dignified gentleman, because “old age is most advantageous to deliberation,” dressed in a reddish colored robe. Ripa also states that he should be accompanied by the *signum triceps* signifying “the principle forms of Time, Past, Present, and Future; according to Piero Valeriano... ‘simbolo della Prudenza.’” The old man holds a book as an appropriate symbol for the study of—or transference of—Wisdom. He also has a glass, or a mirror, for the prudent man is cognizant of his abilities as well as his limitations, just as one knows one’s reflection in the glass.²⁶

Thus, Good Judgment is acquired with age, and Nestor was always cited as its paragon. Therefore, when we turn to a Spanish translation (1615) of Alciati’s *Liber Emblematum*, we see that Nestor, that epitome of Aged Wisdom, is depicted prominently proffering his handsome cup of knowledge (“*Schiphus Nestoris*”, Emblema 101).²⁷ (fig. 9). Diego López Alciati’s translator and learned commentator, informs us that this emblem “represents Nestor, a man of great counsel (*de gran consejo*)”, and, further, that such knowledge as that which he offers “can only be attained and understood by the wise man, and the very experienced man (*el muy exercitado*, or “well-trained), as only Nestor was able to bear its weight. And so they recount to us that although Nestor was aged, he was able to carry it and to support its weight even though the other youths (*otros mancebos*) could scarcely lift it from the table.”²⁸ In other words, Good Judgment, predicated upon Prudence, is only acquired in Old Age; as in the *Aguador de Sevilla*, the Cup of Knowledge is not yet taken hold of by Youth, although it is not necessarily beyond his perhaps reluctant reach-if it is offered to them by wise and experienced Old Age.

To conclude our study of the symbolic significance which may be attributed to the iconographic particulars of the *Aguador de Sevilla*, we might add that there are several illuminating water metaphors contained in Leonardo da Vinci’s treatises. Not only is Pacheco known to have possessed a manuscript copy of the *Trattati*, but this manuscript also appeared in the posthumous inventories of Velázquez’s belongings, which was drawn up in 1660.²⁹ Therefore, without any doubt what-

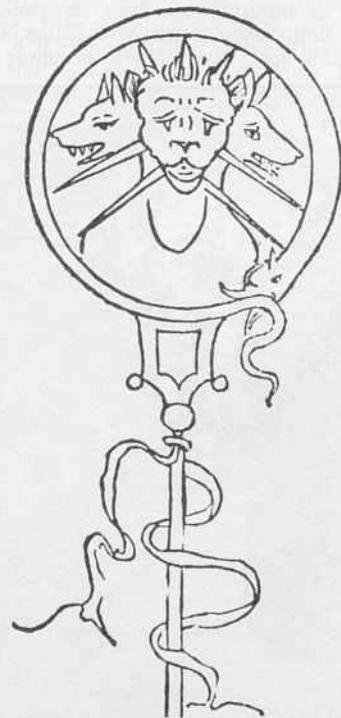
(Text as given in Panofsky, “Titian’s ‘Allegory of Prudence,’” pp. 152-3, n. 26).

²⁶ *Iconologia/Overo/Decrittione/Delle Imagini vniuersali, / Cauate dalle Statue, & Megaglie antiche, & da buo-nissimi Auttori Greci, & Latini:/di Cesare Ripa Pervgino./Opera vtilissima, & necessaria a gli Historici, & Poeti, & a desi-/derosi d’intendere l’occulta sapienza de gli antichi... IN MILANO... M.DCII. (sic: 1603), p. 85.*

²⁷ *Declaracion / Magistral / Sobre las Emblemas de Andrés Alciato./ Con todas las Historias, / Antiguedades, Moralidad y Doctrina, tocante / a las buenas costumbres./ Por Diego López, natural / De la Villa de Valencia, de la Orden de / Alcántara. Nájera, 1615.*

²⁸ LOPEZ, *ibid.*, edition of 1655, Valencia, p. 386.

²⁹ Inventory dated “10-VIII-1660”. “No. 558. —Leonardo de Vinci de la pintura.” Published in “*Varia Velázqueña*”, Madrid, 1960, vol. II, p. 399.



5 - “Simulacro de Serapis” (F. Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Polyphillii*, Venecia, 1499).

³⁰ J. P. RICHTER, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, London, 1883, no. 490 (Italics mine):... "perche questi tali maestri son(o) si rari che pochi se ne trova, e piu sicuro andare alle cose naturalie... perchè chi può andare alla fonte non vada al vaso." Elsewhere Leonardo had cited water as the "vital humor of this arid Earth" (L'aqua è proprio quella che per vitale umore di questa arida terra è dedicata." (Richter, no. 965).

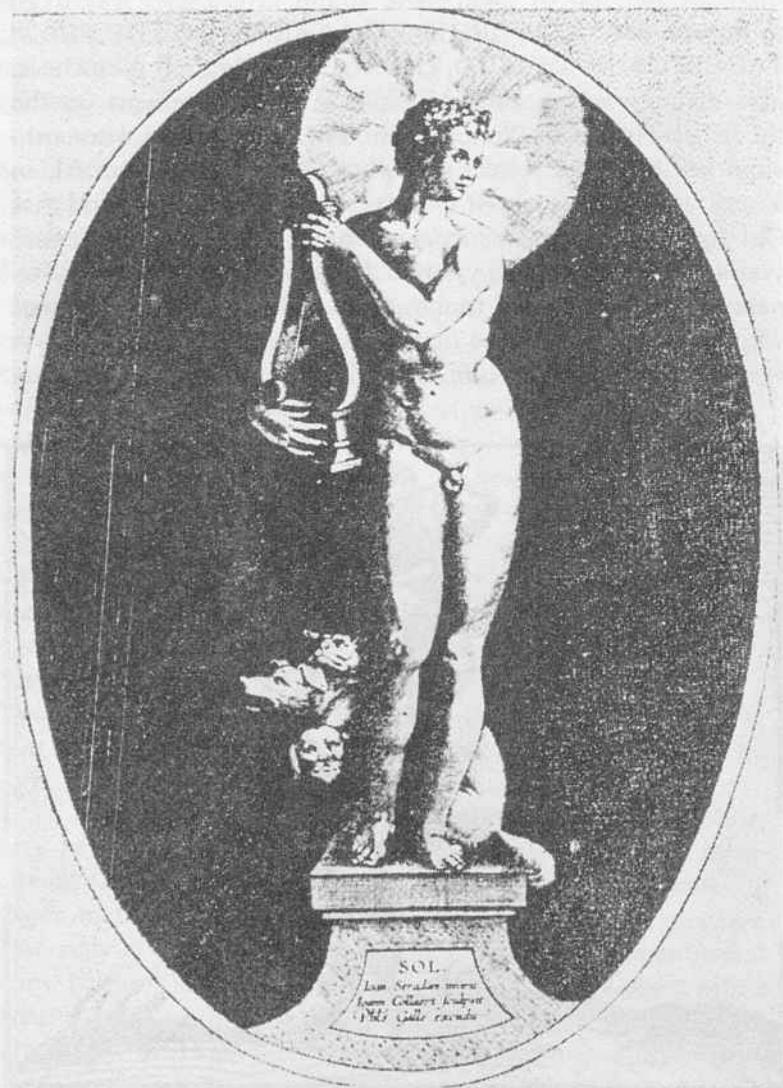
soever, we can say that Leonardo's comments would have been equally known to both Pacheco and to Velázquez. The most significant of these, for our purposes, is to be found in a section discussing "The Study of Art and its Ordering" (*Dello studio e suo ordine*). For the apprentice painter, Leonardo enjoins study from nature. Preceding the study of nature, however, the student must devote his efforts to analyses of various compositions by skilled masters ("*studiosi maestri*"). Leonardo concludes that "since such masters are so rare that there are but few of them to be found, it is a surer way to go to natural objects... FOR HE WHO CAN GO TO THE FOUNTAIN DOES NOT GO TO THE WATER-JAR."³⁰ Elsewhere, in a manner reminiscent of Titian's visual statement on the theme of Time-Past, Time-Present and Time-Future, Leonardo employs another water metaphor. "Learning acquired in Youth arrests the evils of Old Age; and if you understand that Old Age has wisdom for its nourishment, you will so conduct yourself in Youth that your Old Age will not lack for sustenance... The water you touch, as in a river, is the last of that which has passed, and the first of that which is coming. Thus it is with Time Present. Life, if well spent, is long" ("... l'aqua



6- "De tricipitio-Sol" (El Sol) (*Les Hieroglyphiques de Jan-Valerian*, Lyon, 1615).

che tochi de' fiumi è l'ultima di quella che andò, e prima di quelle che viene, così il tempo presente: la vita bene spesa lunga è").³¹ This then gives us a context by which we may proceed to speculate upon the emblematic meaning of the fig which 'sweetens' the waters of wisdom in the crystalline goblet. We find a similar, and most appropriate, conjunction of figs, water and wisdom in James 3:11-13: "Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish? Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No

³¹ RICHTER, *ibid.*, nos. 1171, 1174.



7 - Jan Collaert (según G. Stradano):
"Apolo-Sol acompañado del "sig-
num triceps". h. 1575.

³² Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica sive de sacris Aegyptiorum...* etc., was first published in Basel in 1556 and there were several later editions. For convenience's sake I have referred to an early 17th century French edition. "Il y a à Rome en un vieil marbre le simulacre de fidius, représenté comme s'enfuit. C'est un homme sans barbe, mais toutesfois d'age meur, avec ce nom, HONOR, Honneur. Il tend la main a la VERITÉ, représentée par la forme d'une file, & la conseruent inuiolablement, sçavoir est, le desir d'honneur, la verité des promesses, & l'amour, sans la presence & la saueur duquel, la foy se corrompt aisement. Car l'honneur soustient la foy, la verité l'engendre, & l'amour la nourrit." *Les Hieroglyphiques de Ian-Valerian... autrement, Commentaires des Lettres et Figures Sacrées des Aegyptiens & Autres Nations*, Lyon, 1615, p. 787. Elsewhere in the *Hieroglyphica* it is stated that the *signum triceps* "signifie communement Geryon... Hespagne (est) entendue par l'hieroglyphique de Geryon or que l'Hespagne, laquelle se divise en trois contrees, soit entendue par l'hieroglyphique de Geryon, plusieurs auteurs le nous apprennent." (cf. *Du Triple Chef*; livre XXXII, chapitres XXIII - XXIV: "Les Geryons"; "Hespagne", p. 404).

³³ "Or son principal hieroglyphicque est de signifier la douceur, & gracieusité des hommes, que les autres choses amiables & recreatisues... Et de faict aucuns appellent



8 - "El Consejo" (Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, Venecia, 1643).

more can salt water yield fresh. Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good kife let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom."

We may now point to yet another influential emblem-book which seems even to have furnished Velázquez with the basic compositional pattern of the *Aguador de Sevilla*. In Pierio Valeriano's widely consulted *Hieroglyphica* (Book 49, chapter 32), the article on "Fidius" (Jupiter as a personification of "Faith" or "Trust") is illustrated with a simple woodcut depicting three personages of varying ages who are arranged in a shallow half-circle. The text in translation explains that: "There was in Rome an ancient marble sculpture which represented Fidius in this manner: there is a beardless man of mature years with this name: HONOR. He gives his hand to Truth (VERITAS), represented by a girl, and takes her hand. Love (AMOR) is in the middle, and is a young boy. This (image) comes about because Faith is supported by these three (Virtues). They preserve (Faith) inviolable; by these (three parts) are meant: the desire for Honor; the Truth of promises; and Love, without whose benefit Faith is easily corrupted. Honor sustains Faith, and Truth gives birth to Faith, and Love nourishes Faith."³²

The *Hieroglyphica* also reinforces the positive interpretation of the fig in the glass as a 'sweet' emblem of Wisdom. Valeriano saw the fig as the hieroglyphic of Sweetness; therefore, he says, "its principle hieroglyphic meaning is that of Sweetness, and specially it signifies agreeable conversation and graciousness between men, as well as other agreeable and recreative things... They have in fact been called love-figs for it is these which led to a pure and sweet life... Besides this, we read in the Holy Scriptures that well-intentioned people found repose beneath the fig-tree; that is to say, they led a sweet and pacific existence."³³

One has good reason to believe that even the water-vendor's utensils — as much in number as in distinctive materials — were also intended by Velázquez to symbolically complement the male trio representing Youth, Maturity and Old Age. In the *Aguador de Sevilla* four containers or vessels may be seen: a large, unfired, earthenware jar, a smaller vase of fired clay (terra-cotta), a third of white porcelin-like earthenware, and, finally, the crystal cup. Their more than visual meaning is elucidated by a treatise, perhaps of Hispano-Arabic origins, usually called "The Magical Art of Artephius" (*L'Art magique*

d'Artephius et de Mibinius, divisée en huit propositions). The anonymous author informs us that "Artephius made a (divinatory) instrument and prepared it with vases in this manner: by the earthenware vase is the *Past* known, by the unfired (or, alternatively, copper) vase the *Present*, and by the glass vase the *Future*. He arranges them in yet another fashion; that is to say, in place of the earthenware vase a silver vase full of wine is set, and the copper one is filled with oil, and the glass with water. Then you will see *present things* in the earthenware vase, *past things* in the copper, and *future things* in the silver... All must be shielded from the sun... The work must be done in a place far from any noise, and all must be in deep silence... In the water, the shadow of the thing is seen, in the oil, the appearance of the person, and in the wine, the very thing itself; and there is the invention."³⁴ 34

Time, which is the finite image of infinite eternity, was therefore regarded during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance

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aime-figues, ceux qui menent une pure & douce vie... Et dit-on, comme nous lisons ailleurs en la Sainte Escriture, que les gens de bien se reposent sous le figuier; c'est à dire qu'ils menent une vie douce & paisible." (cf. *De la figue*"; Livre LIII; chapitre XXIX: La Douceur", pp. 713-14).

³⁴ Cited by Emile GRILLOT DE GIVRY, *An Illustrated Anthology of Soccery, Magic and Alchemy*, (J. C. Locke, trans.), N. Y., 1973 p. 308, italics mine. There were various editions of these treatises published in the 17th century: *Traité de la Pierre philosphale*. Paris, 1612; *Philosophie naturelle de trois anciens philosophes renommez: Artephirus, Flamel et Syne-sius...*, Paris, 1682; *Artificii clavis maioris philosphale*, Aregentorati, 1699, etc., Artephius must have lived before 1250. Additionally, his name, as is often the case, is perhaps the Latinized version of an otherwise unknown Arab author (Al-Tai-fa?). (E. VON LIPPMANN, *Entsenhung und Ausbreitung der alchemie*, Berlin, 1919; Titus BURCKHARDT, *Alchemie: der Wissenschaft der Cosmos, der Wissenschaft der Seele*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1960). Artephius' manuscript was included in the "Bibliothèque des philosophes chimiques", Paris, 1791. Due to the probable Arabic derivation of his *L'Art magique*, one may imagine that it was initially translated into Latin in Spain, if not indeed composed in "Al-Andalus".

9 - "Sciphus Nestoris" (Diego López, *Declaración Magistral sobre los Emblemas de Andrés Alciato*, Valencia, 1655).

³⁵ Figure 11 is taken from the copy made from the original and is found in: A. N. Didron, *Christian Iconography: The History of Christian Art in the Middle Ages*, London, 1886, II, p. 25, fig. 136.

³⁶ We have Pacheco's statement to the pride he felt in his son-in-law's accomplishments which he felt directly contributed to immortalizing his fame and reputation: "Y porque es mayor la honra de maestro que la del suegro ha sido justo estorbar el atrevimiento de alguno que se quiere atribuir esta gloria, quitándome la corona de mis posteros años. No tengo por mengua aventajarse el discípulo al maestro (habiendo dicho la VERDAD), ni perdió Leonardo de Vinci de tener a Rafael por discípulo, ni Jorge de Castelfranco a Ticiano, ni Platón a Aristóteles, pues no le quitó el nombre de Divino". *Arte de la Pintura*, vol. I, p. 155 (italics mine).

under the three aspects of the past, the present, and the future. The aspect of the future was recognized but imperfectly by the classical image of the bicephalus Janus. To the mind of the Christian, however, the present had much more value than the past and was at least of as much worth as the future: what indeed is life without an active present? Without the concrete realities of the actual moment, memories of the past and anticipations of the future are little but chimeræ, vanished dreams and as yet unfulfilled promise. The present alone forgives past folly and promises grace for the future. This poetic concept is given tangible form in a 14th century illustration from the *Officium Ecclesiasticum* (MS. Théologique Latine, 133c, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, Paris). ³⁷ (fig. 11) This personification of the year as a single body with three faces was placed at the beginning of the manuscript and below the month of January. The Present, having laid down a jug, is shown drinking from a goblet very much like the chalice-like glass in Velázquez's *Aguador de Sevilla*. The Past and the Future quietly meditate, each wrapped in his own thoughts, while the Present drinks from the cup.

In conclusion we see that the *Aguador de Sevilla* is likely to represent a combination of *Prudencia* and *Consilium*, such as that described by Ripa, Valeriano, and Alciati, all of whom, we may logically assume, were intimately known to the erudite Pacheco. We might then even suppose that it was Pacheco himself who pointed out these traditional subjects as eminently appropriate subject-matter for a *pièce d'occasion* by which his favorite pupil and son-in-law might ensure his success in Madrid in securing the avidly sought court position. And, certainly, the success of the pupil would reflect equally upon the accomplishments of the master. ³⁵ The combination *Prudentia-Consilium* in the *Aguador de Sevilla* provided the aspiring Velázquez, then 24, with an admirable vehicle in which he might both combine realistic rendering and subtly didactic content as an impressive tour-de-force, specifically as a demonstration of his consummate abilities in resolving the inherent difficulties of *imitación* placed in the service of *agudeza*. I might even go so far as to state that the representation of "Old Age-Wisdom," that is, the "Aguador" himself, is an implied portrait — en lieu of any documented contradictory visual evidence — of the *maestro de taller*, his beloved teacher Francisco Pacheco. ³⁶ As depicted in the *Aguador de Sevilla*,



10 - "Fidii simulacrum" (*Les Hieroglyphiques de Ian-Valerian*, Lyon, 1615).

the shadowy figure in the background, which represents "Maturity", combines both the vigor of youth and the intelligent faculties of middle age; in his role as the representation of the Present, he symbolizes both its potentiality and actuality into a state of climatic perfection. Therefore, Maturity, so avidly drinking from the previously proffered Cup of Knowledge, while at the same time literally withdrawing into the background, can symbolically represent the reticent, retiring, and prudent figure of Diego Velázquez himself.³⁷ The handsome and inexperienced "Youth", of about 15 years of age, may then metaphorically represent one of Velázquez's younger apprentices, such as Diego Melgar,³⁸ who were then attached to the young maestro's Sevillian workshop.

As has been shown in various ways, it is now well within the realm of plausibility to reconsider the *Water-Carrier of Seville* as representing perhaps something more than just an extremely handsome genre-study. We hope the evidence here presented may demonstrate that this painting is quite likely to have ALSO functioned, in general, as a young painter's personal reflections upon the three stages of wisdom and, in particular, as a commentary upon the stages of progress to a full and mature mastery of the painter's craft, which begins with dependence upon a "studioso maestro". And which culminates in the sage study of Nature herself. And, after all, Pacheco himself stated that there were THREE "states of painters": Beginners (*los principantes*), and those in the midst of their career (*los aprovechados*), and "those who have arrived at the end" (*los perfectos*).³⁹ As the "studious master" in this case could be none other than the learned Francisco Pacheco, then this painting may be thought to represent an eloquent and historiated testimony from a grateful Velázquez to his beloved teacher and familiar, serving as an act of homage to Pacheco's mastery of his profession, as well as to the effectiveness of his good counsel.

Since this article was sent to the printer's, I have had an opportunity to study to my advantage an important work by the *maestra británica* of the University of London and the Warburg Institute, Dr. Frances A. Yates: *The Art of Memory* (London, 1966). I was pleased—and somewhat surprised—to learn, as Prof. Yates' study clearly indicates, that Velázquez's "*Prudencia: Las tres edades del hombre*" has an even greater significance than that I had originally ascribed to it! Her

³⁷ The *Portrait of a Man with a Goatee* (Prado, no. 1209) had been considered by Juan ALLENDE-SALAZAR (*Velázquez. Des Meisters Gemälde*, Berlin, 1925, p. 12) as a portrait of Pacheco; his conclusions were based on the (slight) resemblance to an engraving of a lost *Last Judgment* in which Pacheco had included a self-portrait.

³⁸ This possible inclusion of a self-portrait into a didactic *tricipitum* is not at all unique or unprecedented. In the drawing of three conjoined heads by Baccio Bandinelli, now in the Metropolitan Museum, the central head—"Maturity"—is thought to be very likely a self-portrait, whereas the head representing "Future" is that of a handsome but inexperienced "Youth". In the head personifying "Past" some have noted a marked resemblance to Leonardo da Vinci! (J. Bean and Felice Stampfle, eds., *Drawings from New York Collections*, N. Y., 1965, vol. I, p. 52, No. 75). Panofsky said of Bandinelli's intentions, in this evidently allegorical self-portrait (*Problems in Titian*, p. 104), that "Bandinelli, in his proverbial arrogance, thus seems to declare his superiority over his successors as well as his forerunners, including even the masters of ancient Greece and Rome, claiming thereby the place universally allotted to his great rival, Michelangelo." Bandinelli's "proverbial arrogance" is attested to by Vasari's biography of him (*Le Vite*, VI, pp. 194ff., Milanese ed.). Now, from what we do know of Velázquez's character, we may certainly surmise that this is hardly the case in the *Aguador de Sevilla*.

³⁹ Melgar entered Velázquez's taller in 1620 when he was thirteen years of age. (*Documentos para la historia de arte en Andalucía*, Seville, 1930, II, p. 7.) This "Youth" is, however, the same model employed by Velázquez in the *Old Woman Frying Eggs* (Edinburgh, National Gallery) which was dated by the artist in 1618. The close similarity of pose, in addition to that of physiognomy, would suggest that the painter of the *Aguador* had copied this figure from the earlier Edinburgh canvas, and not "from nature". As these three figures obviously exist within a wholly "symbolic" context, their specific identities are of less importance than their contextual significance.

⁴⁰ *Arte de la pintura*, libro primero, cap. XII: "De tres estados de pintores, que comienzan, median y llegan al fin": "... será necesario mostrar tres caminos o estados que se hallan en los que la profesan, que son de principantes, aprovechados y perfectos, etc." (ed. cit., p. 237ff.).



11 - "El Tiempo tricéfalo" (según un manuscrito francés del siglo XIV).

extensive and superbly documented monograph deals with both the literary and visual phenomena of the venerable tradition of the *ars memoriva*. In this book, repeated references found to the "Three Parts of Memory", especially to this tread as a function of the Virtue of *Prudentia*! In short, Velázquez's admirable canvas, as it has been interpreted in these pages, belongs to an important chapter in the History of Ideas, one which can be easily traced (vía Yates) back to the Hellenistic period and forward in time into the Baroque. For my readers in Spain (for it is the recent Castillian translation which I have at hand) I shall cite the pagges most relevant to the present interpretation: F. A. Yates, *El Arte de la Memoria*, (I. Gómez de Liaño, traductor), Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, S.A., 1974, esp. pp. 82, 85, 91, 120, 127, 193, (etc.).