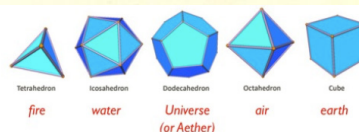
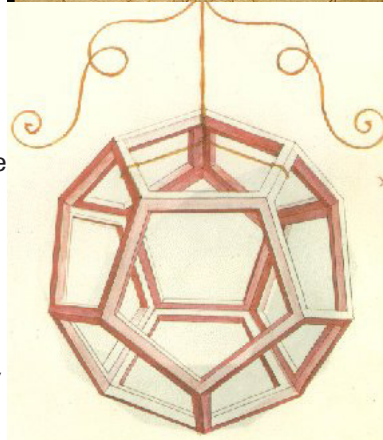


N: It has indeed been a long time since we have last conversed! I am glad your thesis exhibition turned out to be great.

I have just read “My Typographies” by Elliman, and it has taken me on a journey on reading about Ancient Greeks, ratios, and polyhedra, which I am going to share with you.

In Elliman’s writing, I was initially drawn to the quote from Stanley Morison’s book *Fra Luca de Pacioli*, which goes “As a speculation Fra Luca de Pacioli.. ventures that letters were invented by chance.” Elliman uses this reference to argue, like you have said, how someone has decided that the letter A should look like the letter A, and that was how we have constructed our writing systems. I did some research on Pacioli and found that he collaborated with Leonardo Da Vinci on his book, *De Divina Proportione (On the Divine Proportion)*. In his book, Pacioli considers and explains the ratios found in nature, architecture, arts, and even letters. This drawing (Figure 1) reminded me of Leonardo’s *Vitruvian Man*¹, in which Leonardo situates the human body in a square and a circle. Then I did some more research on Pacioli, Leonardo, and this book and found that in his book, Pacioli also discussed polyhedra²—solids in three dimensions with polygonal faces—, which were illustrated by Leonardo. Apparently, ancient Greeks knew five polyhedra (Figure 2), which are also known as the Platonic or cosmic solids. This is because Plato discussed them. In fact, he associated these five solids with elements: the cube with earth, the icosahedron with water, the octahedron with air, the tetrahedron with fire, and the dodecahedron with ether, the material of heavens. In this article³ on platonic solids, the writer argues how “Plato’s mapping from mathematical



ideals to physical reality looks.. wrong," and he says how polyhedra are not "usable blocks for constructing the material world." I am going to argue that this relationship between elements and forms is exactly what Elliman refers to. Similar to how polyhedra are tools for Plato, letters are our "usable blocks for constructing the material world." (It is also funny how Pacioli discussed polyhedra and letters in the same book.)

All my research points to the Renaissance idea of seeing and finding the cosmos in the individual, in the human body, in the nature, and in the letters through the study of ratios. I feel as if all of this is to understand the universe, to connect to it, and to read it. So I wonder if a part of typography is also existential in a way?

9 April 2018

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitruvian_Man

² <http://www.georgehart.com/virtual-polyhedra/leonardo.html>

³ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/blogs/physics/2011/12/beautiful-losers-platos-geometry-of-elements/>