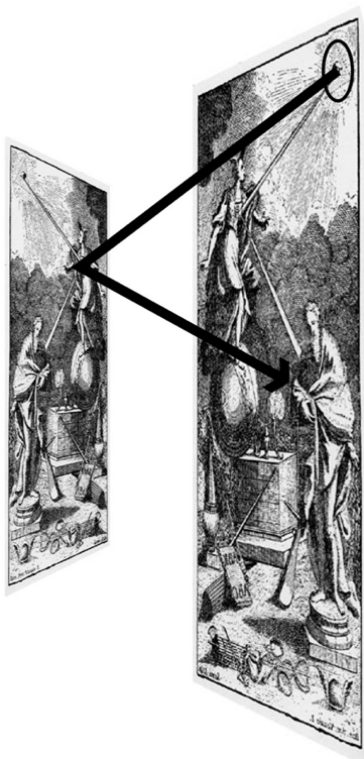


Vico employs the “two Dianas” to introduce *The New Science*; Metafisica leaning on the plinth holding a triangle, sees the triangle through a mirror. This is the way, Vico is telling us, to look at the *dipintura*, where the reader’s eye is in the position of the divine oculus, and Metafisica assists in directing the reader’s gaze to the full range of human creation. The last element is unmentioned in the commentary. It is Vico’s “purloined letter,” which is open to view but not seen by those who are not initiated, who do not know the meaning of the herm. The plan diagram on the right shows that Metafisica is looking at the triangle, not herself. Her head is the farthest from the viewer, and the mirror’s face is obliquely visible to the viewer, which would not be the case if she were looking at her own reflection.

**From *The New Science*:**



§528 From this source imagination conceived the third major deity, Diana, representing the first human need which made itself felt among the giants when they had settled on definite lands and united in marriage with particular women. The theological poets have described the history of these things in two fables of Diana. The first, signifying the modesty of marriage, tells of Diana silently lying with the sleeping Endymion under the darkness of night; so that Diana is chaste with that chastity referred to in a law proposed by Cicero, *Deos caste adeunto*, that one should go to the sacrifice only after making the sacred ablutions. The other tells us of the fearful religion of the water-springs, to which was attached the perpetual epithet of sacred. It is the tale of Actaeon, who, seeing Diana naked (the living spring) and being sprinkled with water by the goddess (to signify that the goddess cast over him the great awe of her divinity), was changed into a stag (the most timid of animals) and torn to pieces by his dogs (the remorse of his own conscience for the violation of religion). Hence *lymphati* (properly, sprinkled with *lympha* or pure water) must have been originally a term applied to the Actaeons who had been maddened by superstitious terror. This poetic history was preserved by the Latins in their word *latices* (evidently from *latendo*), to which is always added the epithet *part*, and which means the water gushing from a spring. The *latices* of the Latins must have been identical with the Greek nymphs, handmaidens of Diana, for *nymphai* in Greek meant the same as *lymphae* [in Latin], The nymphs were so named at a time when all things were apprehended as animate and for the most part human substances, as we have set forth above in the Poetic Metaphysics.