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## FRANCIS WILLIAMS: THE IRONY OF A GALACTIC DISCOVERY OF PRINCIPLE IN ART AND SCIENCE

By Pierre Beaudry, 4/3/2025

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### FOREWORD

Jason Ross sent me an article a few weeks ago written by an Indian-British professor of history from Princeton, Fara Dabhoiwala, about an unsigned and unidentified portrait which had turned up for sale on the London art market in the Fall of 1928, “because of its fine rendition of an 18th-century mahogany table and chair.”<sup>1</sup> The beauty of this portrait, however, is that it has nothing to do with mahogany.

Not only does this portrait tell the most elementary and fundamental truth about British racial behavior, but it also expresses the most advanced and elevated form of epistemological knowledge about Art and Science that I have ever seen on this side of the Atlantic.

When a work of art includes deliberate singularities and ironies crying out to be discovered, it is highly probable that the artist is provoking the observer into a dialogue with the painting by engaging his mind into making a discovery of some sort. The portrait (Figure 1.) of the Jamaican polymath, Francis Williams (c.1690-1762), by William Williams (1727-1791) is a most wonderful form of such a provocative artistic composition, because it provokes your mind into making a discovery of principle.

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<sup>1</sup> [Fara Dabhoiwala · ‘A Man of Parts and Learning’: Francis Williams G521ets His Due](#), published in the London Review of Books, November 21, 2024. See also: [Fara Dabhoiwala | Department of History](#), Princeton University.

## INTRODUCTION

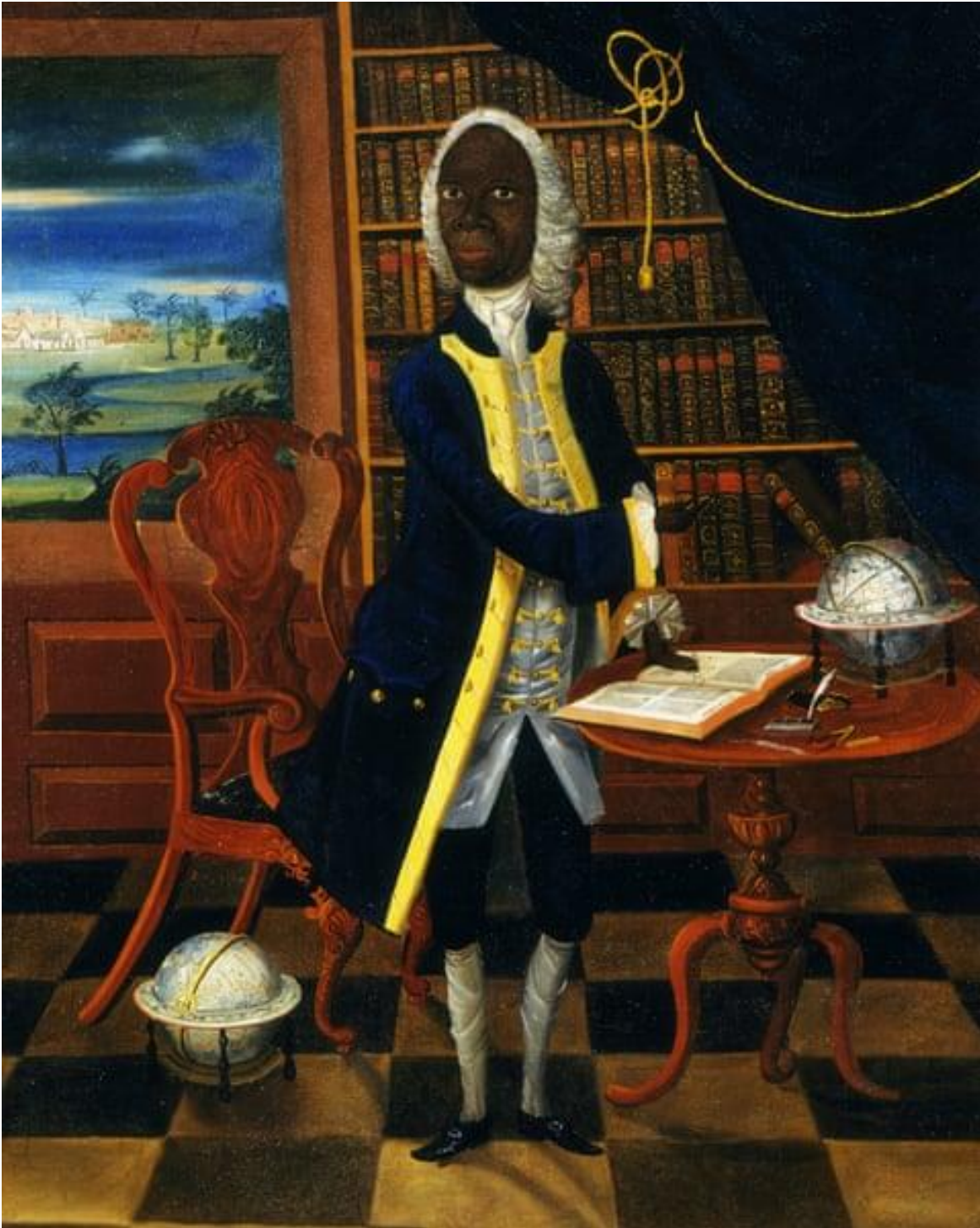


Figure 1. Francis Williams and the discovery of Halley's Comet, by William Williams, c. 1760.  
Photograph: Paul Robins/Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

One of the best ways to describe the nature of a discovery of principle is to show how such a discovery could not take place without the painstaking process of seeking the truthful pathway that led to its hidden hypothesis; that is, by determining that such a pathway is nothing short of a self-generating application of a Platonic Higher Hypothesis. (See Figure 1.)

In his article of the London Review dated November 21, 2024, Fara Dabhoiwala revealed that the portrait was that of Jamaican polymath, Francis Williams (c. 1690-1762), dressed in a gentleman's coat and wig, standing ready to introduce to the world his extraordinary discovery of the return of Halley's Comet over Jamaica, at the period of time that he had correctly calculated and forecasted it to be visible during the late evening of late February and early March, 1759. Such a historical moment well deserved to be remembered.

Jamaicans knew what was going to happen during that period of time because Francis Williams was not only the most well known Jamaican scientist in the world at that time, but his expected prediction was keeping everybody up late at night in order to confirm and celebrate the legitimacy of his forecasting capabilities.

The portrait was commissioned by Francis Williams himself in order to not only commemorate that Halley's Comet event, but also to celebrate the coming into being of his own immortality in the domain of temporal eternity with his ability to forecast.

Several clues show that Francis Williams had successfully computed the trajectory of Halley's Comet coming over Jamaica in early 1759, but the most important clue is the more "elevated view" from the floor of the painting which can barely be seen because of the dim light projected inside of the room.

Go back to Figure 1 and see if you can discover that elevation before I show it to you on Figure 3 page 5 below. Meanwhile, look for another more obvious clue, which can be identified by the open book and the celestial sphere sitting next to it on the table. (See Figure 2.)





Figure 2. Detail of Francis William pointing to the Celestial Sphere and showing to the observer, page 521 of the third edition of Isaac Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, 1726.

The portrait was meant to give to an astute observer an opportunity to discover how to forecast the future return of a comet, and how to apply to his own mind the principle that makes that knowledge possible. The hidden purpose of this portrait can be seen through a barely visible “shadow of Plato’s Cave” demonstrating how a Galactic discovery of principle can be made by a unique form of elevation of the human mind.

### **THE PROOF THAT A DISCOVERY OF PRINCIPLE IS GALACTIC**

The observer may at first be dismayed by the caricature-like representation of Francis Williams’ portrait, purchased in 1928 by the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum for the promotion of British mahogany furniture. You may be tempted to step away from studying the matter any further, but then, if you persevere, you will realize how this painting is an amazing ruse on the part of an American revolutionary associate of Benjamin Franklin, the artist William Williams, whose

purpose was to help Francis Williams create a shock effect to the world of art in order to promote new scientific and artistic discoveries in the New World.

The subject of this painting is that of a well-dressed and cultivated man standing in a library, pointing to a celestial sphere with his right hand, and resting his left hand against the page of an open book.<sup>2</sup> His hands and legs are very thin and disproportionally small with respect to the rest of his body.

Then, as you are looking at the man's legs, there it is, AhA! Something that should not be there suddenly becomes visible: the feet of the furniture and of Francis Williams himself are all floating in mid-air about an inch or so above the floor! (See Figure 3)



Figure 3. Note how nothing is touching the ground. Everything is dancing on air.

Why are all of the shadows showing that everything is raised above the floor? What does such an elevation mean? What is causing such shadows? The passing of the comet? Yes. There are no other outstanding shadows anywhere else

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<sup>2</sup> The Latin book is known to be *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, by Isaac Newton, third edition, 1726. Since this kind of problem was way over Newton's head, the section on Halley's Comet was probably written by Halley himself who had predicted the Comet to show up a year earlier in 1758. Francis' Williams; inquisitive look may simply be coming from asking: "Why couldn't Newton recognize the triple Galactic motion of this discovery?"

inside of that room. That is the first surprise, and the most important one, because there is no other explanation than the light of the comet to explain such an elevation, as if it had been caused to show the truth of the allegory of Plato's Cave.

The second surprise is also indirect and not immediately visible. It is hidden in the language of Dabhoiwala's report on the subject. What is also missing in Francis Williams' portrait is the identification of the reason for his portrayal as a caricature. The truth of the portrait is hidden in the first part of Dabhoiwala's title: [A Man of Parts and Learning: Francis Williams Gets His Due](#). What does that mean? What is Dabhoiwala inferring with this title?

This cryptic title requires investigation. The cryptic meaning of "**A Man of Parts and Learning**," points to David Hume. What the title actually says is: **In spite of David Hume's racial slander, Francis Williams gets his due.**

In his essay *Of National Characters*, published in 1753, David Hume maliciously wrote about Francis Williams without naming him, saying: "*In Jamaica indeed, they talk of one negro as **a man of parts and learning**; but 'tis likely he is admir'd for very **slender accomplishments**, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.*" Dabhoiwala clarified the matter:

"Hume's assertion became tremendously influential: it made him the favorite authority of white supremacists throughout the later eighteenth and the nineteenth century. Although he disdained to name him, the subject of his contempt was no slave but an unusually rich and privileged free Black Jamaican, Francis Williams, who had been educated in England, was an accomplished Latin poet, and owned slaves himself."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Fara Dabhoiwala, [Liberty, Slavery, and Biography: The Hidden Shapes of Free Speech | Journal of British Studies | Cambridge Core](#).





Both William Williams and Francis Williams knew David Hume's slander and that is the reason William Williams drew Francis' limbs as the "*slender accomplishments*" of his personality. Ten years earlier, the same William Williams had painted the legs of an associate of Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Lay, in a similar manner. (See Figure 4)

Figure 4. Quaker abolitionist, Benjamin Lat, 1750, by William Williams.

### WHO IS FRANCIS WILLIAMS?

Fara Dabhoiwala gave an accurate account of who Francis Williams was:

"(Francis) Williams, too, was legally skilled, assured, and articulate. Yet exactly the same values that were admirable in a white man were unbecoming in a Black one. Because white West Indians were so heavily invested in trying to make the distinction between slavery and freedom synonymous with the supposedly straightforward difference between dark and pale bodies, it was deeply aggravating that (as one leading planter complained) Williams 'had not the modesty to be silent' and instead publicly insisted that skin color was irrelevant to intelligence. ('Virtue and understanding,' he wrote, 'have no color; there is no color in an honest mind, nor in art.') Barred because of his color from practicing law or holding public office, he instead opened a school for free Black children, instructing

them in reading, writing, Latin, and mathematics. White Jamaicans tried repeatedly to quiet his voice, but never with complete success.”<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, William Owen, an American archival researcher who followed the same track as Dabhoiwala, added further:

“The truth is this: that he (Francis Williams) was born in the 1690’s to parents who were enslaved and had gained their freedom when he was a boy. He had attended Cambridge University, studied natural history and mathematics. He understood Newtonian physics and calculus and was familiar with the fiendishly difficult mathematics involved in predicting the orbits of comets. He had been involved in Sir Isaac Newton’s circle, which included William Whiston and Edmund Halley and three young Cambridge Newtonians: Martin Folks, Robert Smith and James Jurin. This is probably the group that proposed Williams, unsuccessfully, for election to the Royal Society. The Society rejected Williams ‘for a reason unworthy of that learned body, viz. on account of his complexion’.”<sup>5</sup>

Francis Williams was also known for writing poetry in Latin and was maliciously attacked by another British racist by the name of Edward Long, who wrote a prejudicial *History of Jamaica* (in Latin) in which he included a ten page slander against Francis Williams. According to an anonymous writer called Leisureguy, Long’s book was “a defense of West Indian slavery as ‘inevitably necessary’ and an attempt to prove that all ‘black’ people were naturally inferior to the ‘white race’.”<sup>6</sup> Leisureguy added the following instructive note:

“It is ironic, therefore, that Long is our main source about Francis Williams, who in his lifetime (he died in 1762) had been the most famous Black person in the world, at least among educated English-speaking people.

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<sup>4</sup> Fara Dabhoiwala, [Liberty, Slavery, and Biography: The Hidden Shapes of Free Speech | Journal of British Studies | Cambridge Core](#).

<sup>5</sup> [A Man of Parts and Learning: review - by William Owen](#). There remains to be proven that Newtonian mathematics was able to forecast the cycle of Halley’s Comet, because Newton’s *Principia*, Proposition 41, Problem 21 is nothing but a step by step stated visual observation of the Comet.

<sup>6</sup> [A Man of Parts and Learning: An astonishing history finally discovered – Later On](#), November 28, 2024.



He was rich; he was a gentleman; he was a scholar; he was celebrated as a clever and accomplished person. His memory lived on after his death. In 1774, when trying to argue that Black people were inherently less intelligent than 'Whites', Long had to accept that his readers would already know about Williams. He was forced to write about him because, to prove his theory of innate white superiority, he needed to take him down.

“Francis Williams was born a slave on a Jamaican plantation in the 1690s. His parents, John and Dorothy Williams, were enslaved Africans. They gained their freedom when Francis was a young boy, and eventually, as successful merchants in Spanish Town, became rich enough to send him to England to continue his education. Like most wealthy free people of colour in slave societies, they themselves bought and sold enslaved people. When Williams returned to Jamaica in 1724, after spending almost fifteen years in England, he inherited their wealth, their lands – and their slaves.”<sup>7</sup>

### **THE PROOF OF ELEVATED GALACTIC KNOWLEDGE BY CONSTRUCTION**

A Galactic discovery of principle is a triply-connected Platonic higher hypothesis, which includes 1) a significant physical object or a thought object, 2) the process which leads to its discovery, and 3) the correction of the mistaken sense perception shadows from the Wall of Plato's Cave. In this case, the level of discovery is triply identified by 1) the Galactic cycle of the Sun, 2) the Solar cycle of the comet, and 3) what observers believe to be true from sense perception.

Francis Williams gives the epistemological proof of such a Galactic complex knowledge by drawing several forms of triangulation of his discovery of principle, which he integrated as a higher hypothesis which include: 1) the Celestial Sphere on the table, 2) the Earthly Sphere on the floor, and 3) the perception of Halley's Comet from the window.

Similarly, the unusual triple intersection twist of the knot in the drapery chord above the table also points to a triply-connected process measured by three

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<sup>7</sup> [A Man of Parts and Learning: An astonishing history finally discovered – Later On](#), November 28, 2024.

great spherical circles intersecting the position of the comet on the Celestial Sphere. Such a higher elevated unity integrates Earth hours, Solar days, and Comet years into a higher Galactic concept which can be called a *unit time of temporal eternity*. (Figure 5.) The forecasting time of humanity's future!



Figure 5. Galactic triply-connectedness

Such a triply-connected process of *temporal eternity* alone demonstrates that Williams' level of thinking did not come from the flat plane of sense perception. We are witnessing a Galactic triply-connected ordering process of elevation of the mind which is required for making such a Galactic discovery of principle. You have to put yourself in Francis Williams' shoes to recognize it.

Thus, a Galactic proof requires the *triply-connected demonstration of a non visible truth* which can be adduced from the future, that is from the complex measurements that your mind is able to bring together, such as 1) the truth of the Galactic triple pathway of the comet on the Celestial Sphere, 2) the truth of the Western Atlantic observation of the comet on the Earthly Sphere, and 3) the truth of the distorted shadows of Plato's Cave elevating everything through the window of the room. (See Figure 6.)



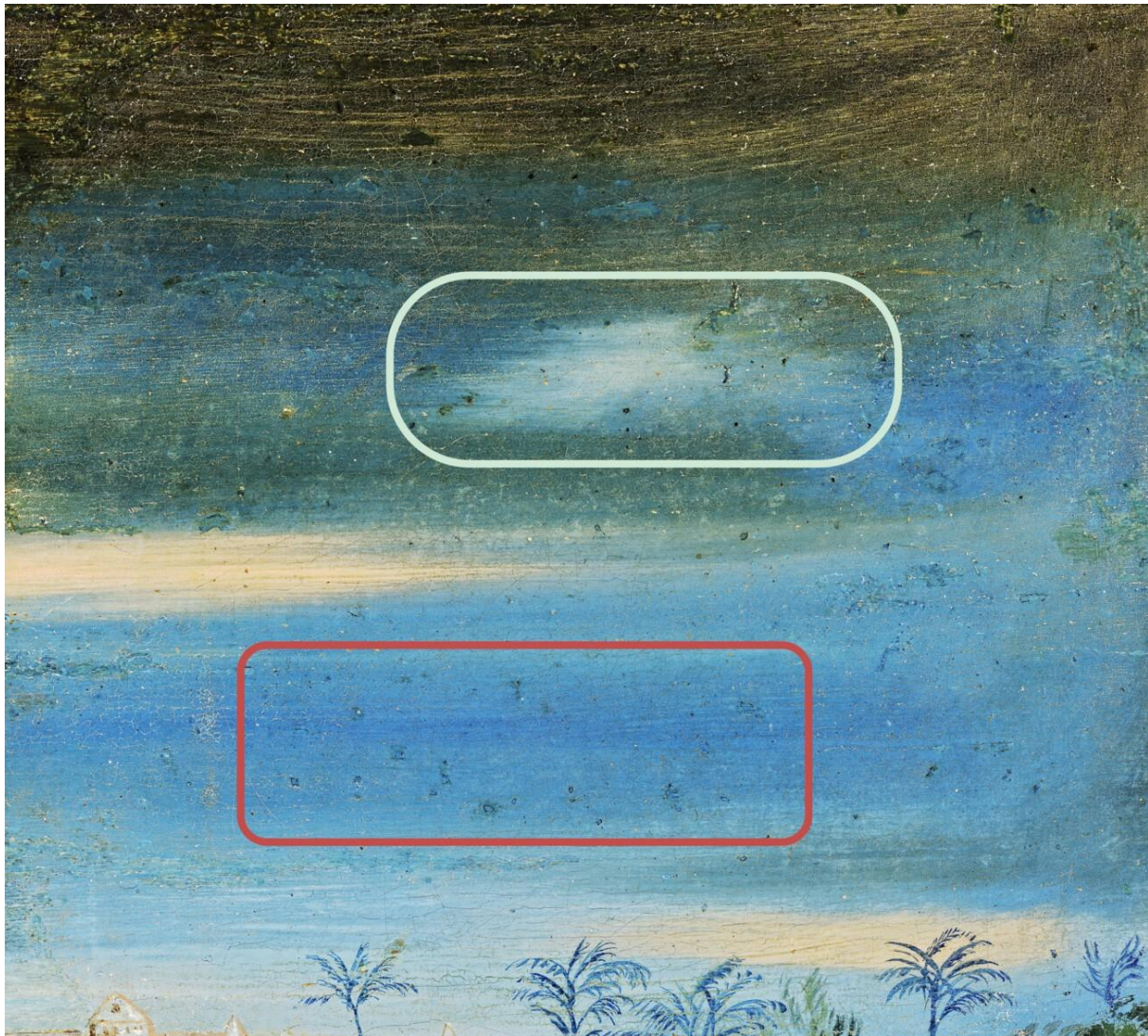


Figure 6. Detail of Francis Williams' portrait showing the comet (circled in blue) above the stars of Centaurus and the Southern Cross (circled in red). ([Fara Dabhoiwala · A Man of Parts and Learning: Francis Williams Gets His Due](#))

With that higher Galactic view in mind, William Williams integrated three views and three levels of knowledge into the portrait. That is an idea of the Trinity where the higher One is reflected in the lower three: 1) the view from above the Heavens, 2) the view from Heaven, and 3) the view from the Earth. All three form a single Galactic view in the *simultaneity of temporal eternity*.

According to Dabhoiwala, Figure 6 shows the mental concept of that celestial event of April 27, 1759, at dusk, over the sky of the capital city of



Jamaica, where the comet was aligned above the stars of Centaurus and of the Southern Cross:<sup>8</sup>

“Look again at the window behind him in his portrait. Through it, you can see palm trees, a river, and thatched colonial buildings. The light coming through the window is bright – it is casting shadows on Williams’s legs and furniture. This is the final clue that jumped out at me when I first looked at the picture, though it took me years to figure out its exact significance: it is not daytime. That bright light is not coming directly from the sun. The top of the sky is pitch black. There are tiny yellow points of starlight in the distant firmament. It is nighttime. More precisely, it is dusk – an excellent time to observe Halley’s Comet during its passage over Jamaica, and its nearest approach to Earth, in late April 1759.”<sup>9</sup>

However, the stars in the portrait are unfortunately not made visible.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, the most interesting feature of Francis Williams’ painting is that the deliberate use of the caricature and the subject of its discovery were meant to provoke the observer into making three crucial discoveries in one: 1) the truth about Halley’s Comet, 2) the elevation of one’s mind to the level of a Galactic

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<sup>8</sup> These three different views of a higher truth are similar to what Raphael included in *The Dispute of the Holy Sacrament*, when he identified his non-visible intention to measure the opposing distances between himself, Thomas Aquinas, and Pope Innocent III with respect to the central position of the Holy Host. See my reports on the triply-connectedness of the Holy Trinity in artistic composition:

[HOW RAPHAEL PORTRAYED THOMAS AQUINASS LOGIC OF GENOCIDE AGAINST THE CATHARS](#) and [THE TRUTH ABOUT THOMAS AQUINAS](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Fara Dabhoiwala · A Man of Parts and Learning: Francis Williams Gets His Due](#)

principle of discovery, and 3) the truth about the racist behavior of British colonial policy.

Francis Williams' portrait, ultimately, is aimed at conveying to the observer that he too can also become a free man, if he is able to laugh at himself above and beyond any ridicule he may be subjected to, because one's appearance should never deter one's mind from making higher discoveries.

Such a discovery of principle also reflects the power which raises one's own mind to the level of *temporal eternity*. If you are not able to elevate yourself to that level, then, you have to investigate why you are so attached to the lower level of Flatland. That is the most powerful and provocative truth that Francis Williams' portrait conveys, and we should be thankful for it, because that is what has made him immortal.

**FIN**