

THE PHYSICALITY OF RUBENS' HUMAN BODIES: VISUALITY AND  
MEDICINE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents new textual and visual source material for our understanding of Rubens' painted human bodies. It identifies hitherto unexamined socio-cultural contexts, as well as contests and revises scholarly assumptions. I maintain that Rubens' bodies were informed by early modern scientific practices and medical discourses. The central argument is that Rubens' understanding of human physicality and the contemporary engagement with basic biological processes converge in his painted bodies. The medical view of the body as a psychosomatic unity – a nexus of material and immaterial properties – opens a new investigative avenue to studies of cultural materialism. The exploration of the enmeshment of materiality and immateriality gives an insight into *how* and *in what ways* matter and image acquire meaning. I argue that the immaterial characteristics of the human body are visually integrated in canvas and paper, pigments, oils and chalk.

By exploring visual and textual sources, this study proposes a larger methodological framework. It brings together visuality, materiality and textuality, providing a cross-referential reading of text and image, and using both of them as core primary material with an argumentative voice. The analysis of the visual case studies (portraiture, history and religious painting) does not draw on a larger pre-determined and extraneous context, but context is produced *by* the image. Therefore, I perceive context as multifarious and wide-ranging.

My approach responds to the previous lack of a broader study of Rubens' bodies via a medical perspective. In this way, this thesis ventures into an interdisciplinary dialogue between the art history and the history of medicine. It contributes to larger questions about the early modern body as an explanatory category for these academic disciplines. This study understands the body as a field of force through which the potential, and limitations, of artistic and scientific, celestial and secular authorities were registered, questioned and negotiated.

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## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted to the University of York in support of my degree of Doctor of History of Art. The work presented was carried out by the author and has not been previously published or submitted for any degree.

## INTRODUCTION

“Quae compositio membrorum, quae conformation liniamentorum, quae figura, quae species humana potest esse pulchior? ...Omnium animantium formam vincit homin[is] figura” (“What disposition of the limbs, what cast of features, what shape or outline can be more beautiful than the human form? ...the human figure surpasses the form of all other living beings”).<sup>1</sup> This quotation drawn from Cicero opens the title page of Rubens’ notebook in which the main theme is the human figure (fig. 1). The notebook is thought to have been largely compiled during Rubens’ stay in Italy (1600-1608) and clearly suggests the artist’s interest in the human body.<sup>2</sup> In this extract from the *Natura Deorum*, Cicero explicitly relates the beautiful form of the human figure to the idea that the human being “is the most exalted, whether by reason of his happiness, or of his eternity”.<sup>3</sup> While the quotation from the notebook focuses on the outer form, the early modern understanding of the human body was largely aligned to Cicero’s association of the outer appearance with immaterial qualities: inner beauty, virtue and reason. In keeping with this, besides the physical appearance of the body, flesh and bones, Rubens was intensely interested in the immateriality of his figures, or, to put it better, in the embodiment of abstract qualities via colours and oils.

Moving between materiality and immateriality, this study reconsiders Rubens’ human bodies and contests established views by disclosing new meanings. Health and its regimen,

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson Manuscript, after Rubens after Cicero, I.47-48, trans. Rackham, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> The notebook is the subject of a forthcoming study by Arnout Balis et al., *Corpus Rubenianum* Ludwig Burchard, XXV, 2015. Three derivative manuscripts are preserved today (the Johnson manuscript, Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, Samuel Courtauld Trust, London; the Chatsworth manuscript, Devonshire Collection in Chatsworth; and the Ganay, American private collection) and the posthumous *Théorie de la figure humaine*, published by Antoine Jombert in 1773; see Rubens, 2003. The Johnson manuscript is considered closest to the original. See further Jaffé, 1966, I: 297-99; Balis, 2001; Meganck, 2007; De Clippel, 2008; Thielemann, forthcoming, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Cicero, I.47; trans. Rackman, 1933.

which pervade outer and inner physicality, were of fundamental importance to Rubens, as suggested by his extensive library holdings, his personal correspondence, daily habits, and his contact and friendship with several doctors and humanists. Yet, how might his medical understanding of the human body have informed and shaped his painted bodies?

This thesis argues that the familiarity and engagement of Rubens with basic physicality and biological processes was inextricably meshed with both his visual representations of human bodies and the painting process. The visual construction of Rubens' subjects will be examined by looking at selected case studies of a wide repertoire: the healthy, the aged and the diseased body will be explored in direct reference to the painter's body, the physician's body, the philosopher's body, the princely body and the body of the infidel. Semi-divine and divine bodies, such as the saintly and the Eucharistic, will also be discussed in relation to the human form. However, this thesis does not claim to be comprehensive and to explore the totality of Rubens' painterly bodies.

My thesis aims to contribute to the medical perspective in Rubens' studies. For example, Ulrich Heinen has explored Rubens' garden from a Neostoic physiological viewpoint, as a place of intellectual recreation and contemplation.<sup>4</sup> He has also examined the Neostoic physiology-philosophy that underpinned the depicted flesh and human passions; a practice he coined "Malphysiologie".<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Heinen has incorporated neuroscience into his interpretation of Rubens' *Medusa* arguing that the depiction of violent emotions by the artist aimed at testing the stress responses of the viewers.<sup>6</sup> Lucy Davis has also expanded the medical perspective by re-examining the Silenus imagery,

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<sup>4</sup> Heinen, 2002, 2004a.

<sup>5</sup> Heinen, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Heinen, 2010.

with reference to the bodily constitution of Silenus in the context of the physiological terms of the period.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Jacques de Bos, who explores Rubens in relation to seventeenth-century psychology, builds on previous studies in the Rubens field on passions and emotions.<sup>8</sup> My own work recently investigated the meshing of early modern dietetics and political philosophy in Rubens' and Frans Snyders' *Pythagoras Advocating Vegetarianism* (1618-20; The Royal Collection, London).<sup>9</sup> These fresh approaches to Rubens pose a new direction to the gendered study of the human body as furthered by Margaret Carroll and Lisa Rosenthal.<sup>10</sup>

Applying a novel approach inevitably requires that certain choices are made and that interesting aspects are either left out of this thesis or not analysed exhaustively, such as a detailed discussion on gender, the female bodies (touched in chapter 6), the children's bodies and issues of birth and death (touched in chapter 6, but from the perspective of the resurrected body). The discussion of gender concepts and masculinity therefore references merely the engagement with physicality and medical concepts and does not take place within the framework of a systematic gender study.

The present study proposes a larger methodological framework by bringing together visibility, materiality and textuality. Visibility and materiality have been traditionally perceived as different fields of studies; yet, both constitute part of the broader field of cultural studies and boundaries between them often collapse. The "pictorial/iconic turn" or

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<sup>7</sup> Davis, forthcoming, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> De Bos, forthcoming, 2015. For Rubens' representations of passions and emotions, see Walker, 2010; Büttner and Heinen, 2004; and Heinen and Thielemann (eds), 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Georgoulia, forthcoming, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Carroll, 1989; Rosenthal, 2005. Rosenthal (2005: ch. 4-5) has also enriched the medical standpoint by complementing her iconographic-semiotic approach to Rubens' political allegories by also suggesting Freudian psychoanalytical insights.



“Ikonische Wende”, defined as a “postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality”, and the “material turn” are perceived as approaches that have foregrounded visual imagery and material objects, respectively.<sup>11</sup> As focal points of study, images and objects have received the status of agents and carriers of meaning, and as such have been appreciated as active contributors to a better understanding of history. However, visual studies have been criticised for overlooking the materiality of objects and limiting their focus to imagery and meaning, while the opposite has often happened to material studies.<sup>12</sup>

The “pictorial turn” was signalled both by Thomas Mitchell and Gottfried Boehm in 1994.<sup>13</sup> Originating with art historians, the attempt, which aimed at turning attention to visual images as equally important to texts in producing theory, was mainly built on the conflict between visual and textual forms of communication. In *What Do Pictures Want?* Mitchell states that “pictures want equal rights with language, not to be turned into language”.<sup>14</sup> Whereas this statement is largely utopian, scholars have convincingly foregrounded visibility by arguing that images create a different reality independent of verbal or textual language. A good case in point is Horst Bredekamp, who believes that images not only build their own argument and position themselves, but also, and most innovatively, have the power to generate “act”, namely interact with the beholder and move him/her to (re-)action (what Bredekamp calls “Bildakte” – or “picture act”).<sup>15</sup> Whilst statements that images have an independent voice are frequently articulated, we are still

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<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, 1994: qt. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Hamling and Richardson, 2010: 10-12.

<sup>13</sup> Boehm, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Mitchell, 2005: 47.

<sup>15</sup> Bredekamp, 2004, 2010.

hesitant, as James Elkins underlines, to credit images with “actually lead[ing], divert[ing], or undermine[ing] our arguments”.<sup>16</sup>

The “material turn”, on the other hand, which has progressively influenced the humanities over the last two decades, focuses on the physicality and materiality of artefacts with particular emphasis on everyday objects. Formulated in the 1980s by archaeologists and anthropologists, today material culture has embraced all fields in the humanities – archaeology, anthropology, sociology, history, history of art, history of science, museum studies, geography and psychology – and has recently also expanded to science and technology studies (STS). As Karen Harvey, in the collection of essays *History and Material Culture* explains: “Unlike ‘object’ or ‘artefact’, ‘material culture’ encapsulates not just the physical attributes of an object, but the myriad and shifting contexts through which it acquires meaning.”<sup>17</sup>

While material culture therefore promises attention to materiality, this does not mean that studies necessarily focus on the form and material properties of the object. Instead, the object is often discussed in relation to its use, meaning, practices of display and ownership. In this framework objects are considered as agents, and give an insight into such things as: past activities and everyday experience, habits and behaviour; the construction of the self; cultural, social and national identity; and gender, status and social interactions.<sup>18</sup> Despite the prominence of objects as the starting and focal point of the discussion, they are often

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<sup>16</sup> Elkins, 2013: 26.

<sup>17</sup> Harvey, 2009: 3.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, the collection edited by Hamling and Richardson, 2010, which focuses on material objects as agents giving access to the everyday experience and presence to the “immateriality” of past beliefs and culture. See also Motture and O’Malley, 2011, who explore early modern objects from the Victoria and Albert Museum and demonstrate the importance of materiality, manufacturing and function for the meaning of the object and thus for a better understanding of daily activities, human behaviour, status, social interactions, ideas and trade.

used as the means to approach human conditions and activities.<sup>19</sup> According to Harvey: “Material culture is not simply objects that people make, use and throw away; it is an integral part of – and indeed shapes – human experience.”<sup>20</sup> It is thus mainly argued that objects draw their significance from their relationship to humans, either as the makers *of* objects, or/and as being made *by* objects. Interestingly, in this dialectic scheme between inanimate and animated matter, the borders of objecthood and subjecthood often shift and conflate with the human body, and are viewed as being under a process of “in-between things”.<sup>21</sup>

The significance of the interaction of the human with the object has been emphasised by the *Journal of Material Culture*, which in its first editorial (1996), broadly defined material culture as “the investigation of the relationship between people and things irrespective of time and space”. Similarly, the Bard Graduate Center and the University of Michigan Press in 2010 announced that the new book series *Cultural Histories of the Material World* would “explore the ways human beings have shaped and interpreted the material world”, also stating that “the overlap of cultural history and the material world has never been made the focus of any institution”.<sup>22</sup>

This investigation of the “human experience” through the object has focused over the last two decades on the “everyday” interactions of the “ordinary” or “common” people, what Patricia Fumerton has described as “a New New Historicism” with an interest in

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<sup>19</sup> E.g. studies of dressing and clothing are indicative of the exploration of material objects in order to reach to wider conclusions about the construction of identity, personal behaviour and activity; see, for example, Rublack, 2010, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Harvey, 2009: 3.

<sup>21</sup> For a recent study on cultural materialism and the binary opposition and limits of object/thing and subject/human, see Boehm, 2012; qt.: 8.

<sup>22</sup> Miller and Tilley, 1996: 5; ‘Bard Graduate Center: Decorative Arts, Design History, Material Culture’, <http://www.bgc.bard.edu/research/publications/chmw.html> (accessed 4 June 2014); see Miller and Louis, 2012; Miller, 2013; Smith, Meyers, and Cook, 2013.

materiality.<sup>23</sup> Whilst the aristocracy “as producer *and consumer*” is not excluded by the “New New Historicism”, Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson in *Everyday Objects* have more recently also focused on “ordinary people”, as “those...outside elite circles who lack a significant presence in the written, documentary record.”<sup>24</sup> In a similar vein, Samuel Cohn criticises the emphasis of studies of material culture in Renaissance Italy – such as Lisa Jardine’s *Worldly Goods* and Evelyn Welch’s *Shopping in the Renaissance* – which, he asserts, have “focused on the rich and their objects preserved in museums or reflected in paintings”.<sup>25</sup> Cohn, as well as Hamling and Richardson, are indicative of a broader movement that is currently taking place in the humanities; a turn, one might say, to “low culture” and “ordinary people”. Yet this turn, in my opinion, runs the same risks as focusing on “high” culture. It offers only a partial view of the past, and overlooks the fact that elite circles and urban patricians not only experienced daily materiality, but also provided significant impetus to the production of materials and the circulation of goods. Drawing a line between “low” and “high” culture can be problematic and not entirely feasible.

Two essays by Tarnya Cooper and Robert Tittler in *Everyday Objects* shed light onto the ways painting is discussed within the framework of cultural materialism.<sup>26</sup> They both focus on practices of display and acquisition, and thus reflect the broader tendency of the field to discuss painting and materiality without addressing the substance of painting, such as the physicality of materials, the brush, pigments and oils, and the painterly medium. In a move in this direction, Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, in the recent collection of essays

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<sup>23</sup> Fumerton, 1999.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*: 5; Hamling and Richardson, 2010: 13-15.

<sup>25</sup> Cohn, 2012: 984; Jardine, 1996; Welch, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Cooper, 2010: 157-78; Tittler, 2010: 179-90.

*Carnal Knowledge*, give a fresh look at the materialism of the arts. They describe a “new materialism”, which “negotiates the relations between the various bodies that enable art to come into being – the material bodies of artists and theorists, the matter of the medium, the technologies of production and the immaterial bodies of knowledge that form the discourse around art.”<sup>27</sup> This process of materialisation of painted bodies through the interactions of physical and epistemological bodies has largely escaped attention, most probably because “the material facts of artistic practice appear so self-evident and integral to our understanding of art that it may seem unremarkable to frame them in terms of the material turn.”<sup>28</sup> Since materiality is at the heart of the arts, material culture studies ought to reconsider how matter *is* or *becomes* enmeshed with meaning.

Despite the fact that it has by now been broadly acknowledged by the humanities that images and objects carry meaning, the relationship between image-matter and meaning is still problematic. The history of medicine is a case in point. Here, attention to visual material has significantly increased. Nevertheless, the subjectivity of the visual medium has not been persuasively explored. One of the fervent supporters of visuality in the field, whose contribution should not be underestimated, is Roy Porter. In his book *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death and Doctors in Britain, 1650-1900*, Porter employs a large number of caricature etchings and lithographs with figurative narratives. He comments that the “project...turned...from a putative picture gallery into a knot of questions about the production and meaning of corporeal and medical representations within media fusing the verbal and visual”.<sup>29</sup> Despite this, the inclusion of the visual material in the book is not

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<sup>27</sup> Barrett and Bolt, 2012: 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.: 5.

<sup>29</sup> Porter, 2001: qt. 11.

always justified, and the text often fails to closely engage with images, which appear largely marginalised; text and image are often juxtaposed in a sort of parallel story, leaving the reader to make a proper link. Thus, Porter's statement "that representations are realities" is not appropriately demonstrated.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, the often long descriptive captions of the images suggest, in my opinion, the author's simultaneous willingness and anxiety with regards to engaging with images.

A more systematic engagement with visual material has been achieved by Ludmilla Jordanova. In her book *Defining Features: Scientific and Medical Portraits 1660-2000*, Jordanova explores medical portraiture and underlines that "portraits are exceptionally rich sources for cultural history. They allow us to think."<sup>31</sup> By employing visual sources, Jordanova shows that images indeed stimulate thinking and raise many questions. Yet the potentiality of visual evidence is not fully explored and the images often do not lead the argument.

More recently, one of the best attempts to persuasively justify the use of images as primary material is the study by Sachiko Kusukawa. Her latest book, which explores the role of the pictures in sixteenth-century printed books on nature and anatomy, succeeds not only in demonstrating the importance of images as a source of knowledge, but also in methodologically counter-balancing image and text, using them both effectively as core primary material.<sup>32</sup> Textual and visual material is shown side by side with the one supplementing the other and driving the argument.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.: 12.

<sup>31</sup> Jordanova, 2000: 163.

<sup>32</sup> Kusukawa, 2012.

In a more art historical approach, Rose Marie San Juan has explored the visual representations in anatomy books.<sup>33</sup> By closely examining the illustrations of skeletons and skulls in Vesalius' treatises, the article investigates the narrative of *memento mori* and argues that the visual material produces a reading different from that generated by the text. With her core argument drawing on images, the author suggests that visual strategies bring a new form of knowledge: the re-animated form of death brings knowledge to life rather than simply expressing conventional moralising messages.

Notwithstanding these fruitful approaches at the interface of art history and the history of medicine, there is still much hesitance about interdisciplinarity. Art historians as well as historians have been quite reluctant to consider that concepts and practices of the history of medicine might be a fundamental part of their arguments. The lack of confidence in incorporating medicine into methodology lies, I believe, in the well-established view that medicine and art are alien fields. Thus, early modern ideas concerning physiological processes, which significantly shaped the contemporary view and construction of the body, have largely escaped the attention of art historians. Nevertheless, medicine and science can provide an investigative avenue for cultural materialism by aiding a more detailed undertaking of the oscillation between materiality and immateriality.

Anthropologist Daniel Miller argues that immateriality is not only directly linked to materiality, but also, and most significantly, "immateriality can only be expressed through materiality". For example, amulets, the Bible, church buildings and sacred art express the spirituality of religion.<sup>34</sup> As Miller puts it:

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<sup>33</sup> San Juan, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, 2005: 28.

the passion for immateriality puts even greater pressure upon the precise symbolic and efficacious potential of whatever material form remains as the expression of spiritual power. ...the greater the emphasis upon immateriality, the more finessed becomes the exploitation of the specificities of the form of materiality by which that immateriality is expressed.<sup>35</sup>

Over the last decade, studies on the human body in early modern Europe have paid consistent attention to this close, fluid relationship between the material and the immaterial.<sup>36</sup> The understanding of the body as a unity of matter, soul and spirit has urged a reassessment of the “binary” opposition between materiality and spirituality with the animated body to be perceived as defining and being defined by the inanimate body.<sup>37</sup> In the early modern period, the importance of immaterial values for the body’s well-being was well recognised and supported by the medical community, which had the authority to

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.: 22, 25.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Hills, 2004. Hills shows the enmeshment of materiality and spirituality by bringing together architecture and body theories to show that early modern convents in Naples shaped and were shaped by the virginity and spirituality of the nuns’ bodies. In Hills’ approach, the architecture of convents was not just a mere metaphor for the body, but a fundamental element for constructing the body’s identity, which also shaped the identity of the buildings. Thus, the visible and the invisible are explored as being in a dialectic relationship.

See also Bynum, who has systematically contributed to scholarship about “the body” in medieval Christianity and the links between, and limitations of the somatic and the spiritual. In her recent book *Christian Materiality*, 2011, Bynum explores the ambivalent role of materiality in Christianity, turning attention to the potential of matter to change into different bodies, accentuating thus the sacramentality of objects. The objects Bynum explores can potentially be animated and can miraculously bleed, weep or walk – objects, such as the host, relics, statues and paintings. The consideration of holy matter thus also includes human bodies, which have the power to not only be transformed, but also transform the body of the viewer (112).

More recently, Cordula van Wyhe (2015a, in print) has explored the borders of spirituality and materiality by examining how the body was experienced by Sister Margaret Van Noort of the royal convent of Discalced Carmelite nuns in Brussels. Based on the nun’s diary (1635), van Wyhe argues that Margaret experienced her body as permeable and transmutable with the bodily humours able to interchange with the material environment.

<sup>37</sup> Woodall, 1997: 12.



diagnose cases of sanctity and miraculous healing.<sup>38</sup> In addition to their presence in the sanctified body, immaterial realities were also believed to largely permeate the constitution of the ordinary human body, as traditionally established by Galenic theory. A look at the medical history of the period shows that the body was understood as a nexus of materiality and immateriality. In order to illuminate this, I shall briefly discuss Galenic physiology, and afterwards show that the combination of material and immaterial properties, which lies at the heart of this physiology, enhanced notions of individuality and identity.

The Hippocratic medical system as modified by Galen was well-embedded in early modern thought.<sup>39</sup> Latin translations of Arabic medical texts, and especially the movement of Greek manuscripts to the west after the fall of the Byzantine Empire (1453), greatly contributed to the establishment of the authority of Hippocrates and Galen.<sup>40</sup> The Galenic medical system should not be understood in purely scientific terms, as we see medicine today, but as a cluster of philosophical-religious-astrological notions influenced by popular culture, and thus much more accessible to the general population than we might assume.

According to Galenic physiology, the body, mind and soul were an inextricable unity, with each one significantly affecting the others. The main idea is that the human body consists of four liquids, called “humours”: blood, choler (or yellow bile), phlegm and black bile (or melancholy).<sup>41</sup> Each humour constitutes a combination of heat, cold, moisture and dryness.<sup>42</sup> Health is based on the balance of the humours, though this does not necessarily imply humoral equality, but rather a quantitative differentiation. The perfect physiology,

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<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Siraisi, 2001; Park, 2006; Pomata, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> For the popularity and reception of Galen through history, see Nutton, 2008: 355-90.

<sup>40</sup> Cook, 2006: 411.

<sup>41</sup> My discussion here draws on the basics of the humoral system, on which the bibliography is vast. See, for example, Hankinson (ed.), 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Blood is hot and moist, while phlegm cold and moist. Choler is hot and dry, while black bile cold and dry.

called “eukrasia”, is very rare. Typically, the individual has an excess of a humour which defines his complexion or, otherwise, temperament. Hence, there are four principal temperaments (sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic) plus numerous combinations. The individual’s temperament affects his or her personality as was vividly illustrated by Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* and is closely related to the four elements and four seasons of the year (fig. 2). In humoral physiology there is no borderline between the materiality and spirituality of the body. Passions and spirits are therefore responsible for an individual’s health. Humours are under a perpetual process of flux, determining mood, appearance, health or illness, and thus affected by changes in food and drink, exercise and physical activity, sleep and rest, retentions and evacuations, mental and emotional states, and the environment and ambient air. In order, therefore, for the individual to be bodily, mentally and spiritually healthy, it was necessary to be vigilant, understanding the physicality of the body, keeping an eye on possible changes, and preventing and curing imbalances by adapting and counter-balancing diet and habits.

Gender, age and even rank further differentiated bodies. Humours continuously changed as a person got older; the female body was constitutive of worse humours than the male body; the lower classes were held distinct for their physical capacities, the elite for their mental rigour and behaviour.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Galenic physiology explained not only the inner body, but also an individual’s outer appearance, character and behaviour, which meant that virtue and morality could also be controlled by the self. Yet the individual has largely the power to choose, and not to repress the self by monitoring the body and

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<sup>43</sup> Regarding rank, see Porter, 2001: 71-72.

adapting lifestyle. It is this flexibility of humoral physiology which enhances the individuality of the self.

Michael Schoenfeldt has provided an understanding of the early modern body by persuasively arguing that Galenic physiology boosted individualism.<sup>44</sup> Whereas Gail Kern Paster and Jonathan Sawday addressed the contribution of medicine to individuality by locating it in dissected and unruly bodies, Schoenfeldt turns to self-control in early modern English poetry.<sup>45</sup> This side of Galenic physio-psychology has been largely neglected by studies on the arts of the period. They have overlooked humoral physiology as being constitutive of the early modern self, and which can thus give insight into the transcendence of matter and the immaterial part of the body.

Furthermore, this emphasis on the physicality of the body – which is used throughout this thesis in the sense of the state, constitution, characteristics, disposition, activity and behaviour of the body as a psychosomatic unity, and not as mere corporeality – counterbalances the widely articulated view of the body as a marionette controlled by rules of etiquette. Mark Jenner has cogently written that the overemphasis on books of manners – typified by Norbert Elias’ work – has resulted in a lack of understanding of the body’s physicality.<sup>46</sup> In spite of the great contribution of Elias’ landmark study of court etiquette and books of conduct, it has crucial limitations.<sup>47</sup> For the purposes of the present discussion, it suffices to say that the individual self in Elias’ work appears as, in Bryson’s

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<sup>44</sup> Schoenfeldt, 1999.

<sup>45</sup> Paster, 1993; Sawday, 1995.

<sup>46</sup> Jenner, 1998: 214.

<sup>47</sup> For an introduction to Elias’ thinking and his work, see Mennell, 1992; and van Krieken, 1998. For the influence of Elias in contemporary sociology, see Loyal and Quilley, 2004. For a critical study on Elias’ work, see Duindam, 1994, who, in contrast to Elias, demonstrates the limitations of royal power; and Bryson, 1998, who criticises Elias for oversimplification, generalisation and a linear development of “civilisation”.

words, a “suppression of biological impulse”.<sup>48</sup> Elias’ study presents a blind adoption of the rules of behaviour spreading like a chimera from the court to the upper classes. The power of personal choice and active practice is excised from his account. Instead, Elias constructs a world of etiquette as mobilised by a sense of “*délicatesse*, this sensibility and a highly developed feeling for the ‘embarrassing’ ”.<sup>49</sup> Thus, as Bryson suggests, Elias looks at “the development of values and forms of behaviour in terms of processes to which individuals and groups are subjected to, rather than allowing that values and behaviour are also a matter of active practice.”<sup>50</sup>

By underlining physicality in this thesis, I wish to illuminate a view of the human body in the early modern period that has not yet attracted much attention. Whereas my starting point is Galenic physiology, what is crucial to my argument is the flexibility that the humoral system gave to individuals to largely choose the self. This, as explained above, does not mean that all were equal, but that people believed they could significantly modify their temperament – their inner and outer constitution and appearance, character and behaviour – through adjusting their daily habits. They could even use the pitfalls of their humours to excuse their behaviour. Furthermore, the discussion will suggest that the early modern medical view of the body as enmeshed with immaterial properties can give a fresh perspective to studies of cultural materialism. I will argue that these immaterial characteristics of the body’s constitution must be reconsidered in the visual media as regards not only the body of the artist, the patron or commissioner, but also the visualised body. By shedding light on painting, I wish to rethink the process of the materialisation of

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<sup>48</sup> Bryson, 1998: 97.

<sup>49</sup> Elias, 1978: 115.

<sup>50</sup> Bryson, 1998: 16.

the body, namely how matter becomes the means of conceptualising the body's material and immaterial constitution, and its spiritualisation. Thus, material and immaterial properties of the body will be investigated as integrated in the visual medium, canvas and paper, as well as in the pigments, oils, varnishes and chalk. While the discussion does not distinguish between the upper and lower classes, it offers a new look at everyday experience, by asking how materiality, and particularly painting, would have made a difference in the everyday experience of the elite as well as the "ordinary" people.

This emphasis on visuality and materiality does not imply a polemic stance to textuality. I bring together visual and textual evidence, paintings and medical texts and illustrations and treat them all as source material. The cross-referential reading of text and image permits the argumentative voice of the one to supplement, or be diverted by the other, and contributes to a holistic view of the body. Rubens' case enhances not only a textual consideration of the visual case studies, due to his strong theoretical grounding, discussed in the following chapter, but also locates the body in the wider cultural and socio-political framework of the period. As a member of the urban patriciate and a diplomatic agent with a presence at all the major European courts, Rubens must have felt the burden of responsibility to contribute to socio-political issues and share his knowledge with other members of the intellectual elite.<sup>51</sup> His painted bodies, as will be argued, cannot be detached from his public persona or from his fervour to contribute to the public good.

This study therefore also considers the painted figures in a reciprocal relationship with larger entities, such as cosmographical (microcosm-macrocosm) and socio-political (urban

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<sup>51</sup> For Rubens as a patrician, see Büttner, 2006a. The values of citizenship, honour, dignity and reputation were highly prized by the European elite. For these values specifically in relation to the Dutch urban elite, see Frijhoff and Spies, 2004: 184-90.

patriciate, body politic, *corpus mysticum*) constructs. My approach thus neither simply subsumes the body into a larger social body nor addresses this relationship in figurative terms, with the body viewed as a metaphor for these larger bodies.<sup>52</sup> This study argues for an ontological relationship between the human body and larger socio-political entities, as being constitutive of each other.

The discussion therefore breaks down the alienation of the body from wider social, cultural and scientific practices by perceiving it both as an active agent and recipient of these processes: what Chris Shilling calls, from a sociological point of view, “corporeal realism”.<sup>53</sup> Shilling, building on theories of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim and Georg Simmel, argues that the body should be viewed as a “multi-dimensional medium for the constitution of society”, with the body to be perceived as: firstly, a “source of” society, which it actively creates; secondly, as a “location for” societal practices, with society reacting back and shaping the body; and finally, through this interaction, the body becomes “a vital *means* through which individuals are *positioned* within and *oriented towards* society”.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, the body has generative capacities which shape society, and through the interactions between them the body is in turn also shaped and acquires individuality.

Accepting that social and cultural practices are under a continuous process of interaction with the body suggests that artefacts and works of art encapsulate these interactive processes of body-society/culture, or at least play some role in them. In this respect, painted bodies are not dead matter but active oscillators of these interactive

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<sup>52</sup> For this approach, see e.g. the collected essays edited by Laurinda Dixon, 2004.

<sup>53</sup> Shilling, 2005.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*: see indicatively 10-11.

processes. Therefore, this thesis asks: Is it possible for the painted body to be seen as “a vital *means* through which individuals are *positioned* within and *oriented towards* society”? Can it act as a “multi-dimensional medium for the constitution of society”?<sup>55</sup> How does the physicality of the depicted body incarnate social processes, position itself and re-act back to society? Whether, and in what ways, does the bodily image affect the spectator and move him or her to action, and what sort of action?

Perceiving painting as an interactive process and materiality as constitutive of immaterial relationships does not therefore subsume the object within a pre-given context. This thesis does not interpret paintings as (pre-)determined merely by extraneous representations, but largely draws on the innate frictions of the characters, elements and meanings of the artworks, as well as on how this inner context establishes a dialectic response to societal, political, cultural, scientific and moral discourses and practices. As Hans Belting argues, “images cannot be extricated from a continuous process of interactions” between endogenous and exogenous representations.<sup>56</sup> Internal and external interactions shape a living context, which is perpetually produced.

By exploring the endogenous and exogenous interactions of the painted bodies, the main purpose of this thesis is to disclose new contexts to Rubens’ human bodies. In order to properly understand the body, I explore it through a wide range of concepts, from the smallest painterly details of pigments and oils to the larger societal contexts. The study also “uncover[s]” the painted body in order to disclose the “unseen” movements of the mind, soul and spirits and raise questions about the ontology of the painted body. In such a

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.: see indicatively 11, 28.

<sup>56</sup> Belting, 2011: 4.

spectrum of inquiry, bodies are not only perceived as having an active voice, they are also regarded as proposing multiple meanings. These two elements constitute what the present study calls the “polyphony” of the body (from the Greek polyphonia, poly = many + phone = voice/sound). By disclosing the “many voices” of the human body in such a rich context, and by moving between materiality and immateriality, this thesis contributes to the discourses on the early modern human body in its visualised and materialised forms.

The exploration of the polyphony of bodies via an interdisciplinary perspective – drawing heavily on physiology and medicine, and in conjunction with many other disciplines (sociology, politics, religion, philosophy, literature and cartography) and also traditional art historical methodologies (iconology and semiotics) – breaks novel ground in the fields of art history and medicine. Regarding my medical viewpoint, three points largely differentiate my approach from other recent studies. One, the focus is systematically on health and healing as a process (chapter 5), with the subject not being identified as medical, as is the case with anatomical illustrations. Two, as regards my attention to physiology – as opposed to anatomy, which has long fascinated scholars – my approach opens up an exploration of the whole body, thus dispensing with the tension felt in studies that examine only a single organ, such as those that focus on skin.<sup>57</sup> The third point lies in my investigation of the body in relation to larger, but not extraneous, contexts. For Christine Boeckl, as well as for Zirka Filipczak, for example, the context for the medical exploration of the human body is pre-determined. Boeckl examines representations of the body in the context of pestilential disease (chapter 5), while

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<sup>57</sup> Te Hennepe, 2012; Fend, 2001, 2005, forthcoming, 2014; Bohde, 2003.



Filipczak in the framework of gender.<sup>58</sup> In the present discussion, each visual case study produces a different, not pre-determined, context, with materiality and imagery as the starting point. Therefore, the topics are various, and include temperamental constitutions, age, skin, bodily balance, mental capacities, mental and physical procreation, corpulence, masculinity, the exchange and intercourse between artists and physicians, disease, deformity, demonic possession, resurrection, spirituality and material transcendence. By exploring oil painting on canvas, panel and paper, manuscripts, prints, book illustrations, title pages and a large amount of primary textual sources in relation to portraiture and history and religious painting, this study aims at a more holistic view of depicted human bodies.

By proposing therefore a novel approach to the body, this thesis will not only be relevant to art historians, but also to early modern historians. I wish also to turn the attention of social and cultural historians of medicine to painting, and to create an awareness of the important contribution an interdisciplinary approach can make to questions about how the body was medically understood and experienced. What kind of choices could medicine offer to forge individuality and how did artists manipulate these choices? How could medical precepts be used to enhance the persuasiveness of the image? How did artists draw on medicine to affect and even change a work's audiences? In this respect, this thesis is linked to more recent approaches that explore how "ordinary" people understood and interpreted their bodies as active agents and not passive respondents.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Boeckl, 1996, 2000; Filipczak, 1997.

<sup>59</sup> See e.g. Stolberg, 2011.

The case studies in this thesis cover a period spanning Rubens' artistic activity from 1603 to 1639 and geographically range from Spain to the Netherlands and England. Needless to say, my primary textual and visual material is not limited to this period, but encompasses the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for a wider contextual and conceptual understanding. Each chapter builds on the examination of one or two visual case studies (plus a manuscript in chapter 3). The order of the chapters has been arranged according to the increasing number of human bodies which interact with the objectified painted bodies, namely the performing body of the painter and the perceiving body (personal or collective; the commissioner, the occupant and/or the spectator of each case study).

Chapter 1 sets the scene by addressing Rubens' medical interest and textual sources and by discussing the enmeshment at various levels of medicine and painting. The painter's body in Rubens' two most famous self-portraits (1623, The Royal Collection, London; c. 1638, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) becomes the focus of chapter 2, which is examined in relation to issues of age, health and disease. The third chapter investigates visual and textual material in order to trace Rubens' intercourse and intellectual exchange with the physician at the English court, Theodore de Mayerne. The fourth chapter investigates as a diplomatic device Rubens' painting of the ancient philosophers, *Democritus and Heraclitus* (1603, Museo de Escultura, Valladolid), and discusses the rhetorical force of the physiological rendering of the figures. In the last chapter, the altarpieces for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp (*The Miracles of St Ignatius Loyola* and *The Miracles of St Francis Xavier*; 1617, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) are explored with reference to their bodily, spiritual and mental interaction and transformation.

## CHAPTER I

### THE MESHING OF MEDICINE AND PAINTING

“...nam pictorem omnia necesse est scire, quoniam omnia imitatur. Est philosophus pictor, architectus, & dissectionis artifex. Argumento est præclara illa totius humani corporis imitatio...” (“...it is necessary for the painter to know everything, since he imitates everything. The painter is a philosopher, an architect and a skilled dissector. This is proved by the excellent representation of all the human body...”).<sup>60</sup> According to the Italian physician and polymath Gerolamo Cardano (1501-76), the painter must be a philosopher, a scientist, an architect, an anatomist and a surgeon, in order to masterfully illustrate the human body. In his popular treatise *De subtilitate* (1550), Cardano opines that painting is the subtlest and noblest (“subtilissima” and “nobelissima”) of all the mechanical arts, and emphasises that besides *imitatio*, mastery in the depiction of the human body lies in the combination of theory and investigation.<sup>61</sup> For Cardano, the ideal *exemplum*, who perfected the representation of the human body, is Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>62</sup> In order to paint “man and the intention of his soul”, Leonardo dissected the human body with his own hands, attempting to understand the mechanism of the body, its postures, gestures and attitudes.<sup>63</sup> At a general level, dissecting was for Leonardo a visual aid, but it eventually acquired an independent purpose as an anatomical, scientific tool.<sup>64</sup>

Whereas for Leonardo, as Jeffrey Muller argues, anatomy was “an end in itself”, different from painting, Rubens used anatomical knowledge as a visual aid to serve his

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<sup>60</sup> Cardano, 1551: bk 17, 529. Unless otherwise noted, translations are mine.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid; bk 17, qt. 529.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Keele, 1964: qt. 360.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

art.<sup>65</sup> His fervent interest in anatomy is indicated by a series of drawings and sketches of the muscular body in movement, such as those of Hercules, Laocoön, and the torso Belvedere, all of which Rubens copied after the famous antique sculptures during his stay in Italy (1600-1608).<sup>66</sup> For *The Dying Seneca* (c. 1610-15, Alte Pinakothek, Munich), Rubens copied the statue of the African fisherman in Rome (then believed to represent Seneca; Louvre), which he later transmitted to this panel, inventing a new scenario and using a new head copied from a bust in his personal collection (figs 3-5). Both drawing and painting show Rubens' fascination with anatomy and physiology. The exaggeration of the veins of the chest and the greenish spots of the skin are justified by the cut veins of Seneca's hand and the bath's hot water, which was supposed to speed blood flow and make dying quicker and easier.<sup>67</sup>

While Rubens as an "anatomist" has never been the topic of a systematic study, the reappearance in 1987 of eleven anatomical drawings considered to be by Rubens (sale cat., London, Christie's, 1987, lots. 57-67), stimulated discussion on Rubens' investigation of anatomy and added more credibility to the reports by the Flemish engraver Willem Panneels (c. 1600-c. 1634), the French painter, engraver, art critic and diplomat Roger de Piles (1635-1709) and the Italian biographer and painter Gian Pietro Bellori (1613-96), concerning Rubens' "annotomibock".<sup>68</sup> Panneels noted several times on his pictorial studies that they were after original drawings that Rubens had included in his

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<sup>65</sup> Muller, 1993: 82-83.

<sup>66</sup> Meulen van der, 1994.

<sup>67</sup> As cogently argued by Heinen, 2001: 70-109. Also, for these images of Rubens' *Seneca* as relating traces of Christian martyrs, see Sauerländer, 2014: 14-29; as creating a multisensory experience and in the light of Rubens' essay *De Imitatione Statuarum*, see Thielemann, forthcoming, 2015.

<sup>68</sup> Rubens and anatomy is the subject of a forthcoming edition of the *Corpus Rubenianum* Ludwig Burchard, XX, in which Nico van Hout discusses the study heads.

“annotomibock”.<sup>69</sup> De Piles stated that the notebook contained “observations about optics, about light and shade, about proportions, about anatomy and, about architecture”.<sup>70</sup> In his *Vite* of 1672 Bellori also stated that “we have seen a book by him that contains observations about optics, symmetry, proportion, anatomy, architecture, and a study of the principal *affetti* and actions”.<sup>71</sup> These eleven anatomical drawings by Rubens are considered today as having once been part of Rubens’ notebook.<sup>72</sup>

These drawings depict the male body *écorché* (without skin, fat and membrane), in movement and with open eyes as being in-between life and death as also depicted in early modern anatomical treatises.<sup>73</sup> With pen and ink or red chalk, the drawings explore the body or separate parts of it – arms, legs or torsos – from several angles that express masculinity, robustness and strength. Figure 6 is indicative of the interest of these studies in intense musculature, movement and three-dimensionality, which are achieved with the technique of hatching and cross-hatching. The back, buttocks and legs are studied in the main figure and explored in two more angles, one of them focusing on the left arm and right leg. Figure 7, from a series of studies of hands, shows Rubens’ interest in understanding blood vessels and bones. That engagement with the hidden body underneath the skin suggests Rubens’ interest in capturing the inner mechanisms of the body and in discovering the hidden truth of human nature like an anatomist.<sup>74</sup> The authenticity of these

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<sup>69</sup> For Panneels’ drawings, see Garff and de la Fuente Pedersen, 1988.

<sup>70</sup> De Piles, 2005: 85. Roger de Piles had in his ownership Rubens’ notebook until his death in 1709; it was destroyed by fire in 1720. He also reports (1699: 166-168) that Rubens kept notes in detail of Leonardo’s anatomical drawings, owned then by the sculptor Pompeo Leoni (now at Windsor Castle), and that Rubens had the opportunity to see them when he visited Spain in 1603. For Rubens and Leonardo, see Muller, 1989: 15, no. 35; Muller 1993.

<sup>71</sup> Bellori, 2005: 205.

<sup>72</sup> For Rubens’ notebook, see here p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Vesalius, 1999: 140-45; Bohde, 2003: 10-47; Stephens, 2007; Te Hennepe, 2012: 528-29.

<sup>74</sup> For the *écorché* studies, see Muller, 1993; and Logan, 2004: 99.

drawings is evidenced by similar anatomical studies by Willem Panneels with inscriptions stating that they are copies after Rubens, and engravings by Paulus Pontius with inscriptions “Petrus Paulus Rubbens delineavit, Paul Pontius sculpsit”.<sup>75</sup>

However, what were Rubens’ methods of studying anatomy? Was he a “skilled dissector” as Cardano advised painters should be, or did he restrict himself to copying sculpture? There is no evidence, to my knowledge, that Rubens worked with cadavers in collaboration with an anatomist, or that he dissected bodies with his own hands as did Da Vinci or Michelangelo.<sup>76</sup> Andrew Cunningham has suggested that Rubens studied anatomy from copying antique muscular sculptures, which are largely accurate anatomically and have the benefit of staying unchanged, so that studies can be drawn from different angles and in different lights.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, the studies of flayed bodies might also have been copied from *écorché* statues in wax, bronze or plaster. For Rubens’ sources, Muller has persuasively pointed to the *écorché* statue of the Borghese Gladiator, while Heinen has suggested Willem van Tetrode’s (c. 1525-80) bronze sculpture of an *écorché* man.<sup>78</sup> That Rubens copied statues as a way of studying the body is supported by the truncated right arm of the body in figure 6.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that illustrated or not, books of medicine could also be an alternative source for studying the mechanisms of the human body. This chapter suggests that textual sources were fundamental to Rubens’ medical knowledge. The main argument is that textual analysis can greatly contribute to our understanding of the personal,

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<sup>75</sup> Garff and de la Fuente Pedersen, 1988.

<sup>76</sup> Vasari in his *Vite* states that Michelangelo “dissected dead bodies in order to study the details of anatomy” (1991: 422); and that Leonardo “had dissected with his own hand” (1991: 292).

<sup>77</sup> Cunningham, paper at the International conference *Rubens and the Human Body*, 17 September, 2010, University of York. For Rubens *Studying the Antique*, see Jaffé, 1977: esp. ch. 10.

<sup>78</sup> Muller, 1993; Heinen, 2004b: 271-73; Logan, 2004: 99; Laurenza, 2012: 40-45.

subjective voice of Rubens' visual human bodies. After exploring the medical, textual material as a significant aid to the painterly process, the second section proceeds to a broader discussion on the enmeshment of medicine and painting by providing an insight into the materiality and practicality of the equipment, tools and working methods of both painters and physicians. The chapter thus sets the scene for the exploration of the painted body from a medical viewpoint.

#### Rubens and his *libri medici*

Elizabeth McGrath has discussed how Rubens used the numerous books that he acquired from the Plantin-Moretus printing house. His acquisitions are recorded in Plantin's archives.<sup>79</sup> While some of these books satisfied Rubens' general interests, others served specific purposes, by providing further information on pictorial enterprises and even inspiring the invention of a completely new subject. Other books would have served Rubens' antiquarian interests, his diplomatic affairs, his interest in learning Greek, or merely the building of his library. As McGrath stresses, however, any and all of these books could have aided him in the painting process:

For Rubens, texts were something to inspire visual wit and invention, not to suppress and contain it. If a motif seemed to him to come to life in pictorial terms, Rubens might

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<sup>79</sup> McGrath, 1997, I, ch. II: 55-67.

borrow it; he might also adapt it appropriately to a new context to capture the spirit, rather than the letter of the classical texts he had read.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, the presence of medical books in Rubens' library could have served both his general interests and his curiosity about nature and the fabric of the human body, or more specific purposes relating to the painter's own body and personal illness. The conceptualisation of the human body as proposed by these books might have affected the painted human body in Rubens' art and thus perhaps have illuminated either a specific detail or its wider understanding. Before attempting to understand the medical rendering of the painterly figures, it would be useful, first, to shed light (as far as possible) on Rubens' methodology in working with medical texts and images; and second, examine the rich medical material that the evidence suggests passed through the artist's hands.

Jeffrey Muller has noticed that a drawing by Rubens, *Flayed Head of an Old Man*, now at Chatsworth, copies the lettered facial muscles and their description from the *Secunda musculorum tabula* found in the landmark *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* by the famous anatomist from Brussels and professor of the University of Padua, Andreas Vesalius (1514-64; figs 8-9).<sup>81</sup> In my opinion, this sheet and its drawing may illuminate the methodology that Rubens followed in studying anatomy. Interestingly, Rubens drew only the head of the Vesalian muscular man with the capital letters on it as they appear in Vesalius' image. To facilitate his study the artist kept notes on the same drawing with his text to largely copy Vesalius', while he omitted some words because of

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.: 67.

<sup>81</sup> Vesalius, 1555 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1543, Basle): 214-15.



space limits. The text next to the image would have helped for the purposes of recollection; the artist could consult the sheet whenever he wished to refresh his memory. Rubens' inventiveness lies in the replacement of the Vesalian face, as Muller perceptively notes, with the ancient Roman bust, considered to be of the Emperor Galba. Most probably the drawing in red chalk, now in the Rubenshuis, was the next step, with its intense depiction of the veins of the face and neck being testimony to the Vesalian lesson (fig. 10).<sup>82</sup>

If the anatomy book was for Rubens the beginning, however, it is tempting to think that the end was the painterly representation and interpretation. Indeed, the impact of the Vesalian face and its *aemulatio* in Rubens' painting becomes clearer by looking at the face of Heraclitus in the *Democritus and Heraclitus* portrait, examined in detail in chapter 4 (1603; fig. 11). Heraclitus' face suggests Rubens' early anatomical interest and studies. While McGrath has already pointed out that the basis of Heraclitus' head was the bust of Galba, I would like to draw attention to the remarkable iconographic proximity of Heraclitus with the Vesalian face and the *Flayed Head of an Old Man*.<sup>83</sup> As I attempt to show in figure 12, the veins and muscles of Heraclitus' face, neck and hands are so close to these faces that we could even locate Vesalius' letters.

A second paradigm that Muller discusses could also illuminate Rubens' use of anatomy books. A sheet by Panneels after Rubens of three male *écorché* trunks copies the engravings by Nicole Beatrizet for *Historia de la composicion del cuerpo humano* by the Spanish physician Juan Valverde de Hamusco (1525-87). The latter extensively copies

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.: 85-87.

<sup>83</sup> McGrath, 1997: II, 55; McGrath (1991: 699) has also pointed to the painted portrait of the emperor.

Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica* (fig. 13).<sup>84</sup> While in Valverde's book the images represent the whole body of a muscular man, Panneels cuts off the trunks, keeps short notes and interestingly adds: "dese annotomikens hebbe ick geteekent wt het boekxken dat ick vant cantor gehaelt hadde" ("These small anatomies I have drawn after the book I had taken from the cantoor").<sup>85</sup> It is not obvious to me whether this book is Rubens' "annotomibock", as Muller proposes, suggesting that Panneels' trunks are copied after Rubens, or whether they are directly copied from Valverde's book, found in Rubens' *cantoor*.<sup>86</sup> However, both cases – Rubens' *Flayed Head* and Panneels' sheet – demonstrate Rubens' use of anatomy books for his study of the human body, which is further attested by the books in the inventory of the artist's son, Albert Rubens, compiled in 1658. Given the fact that the artist bequeathed to his son all the books in his library, it is highly likely that the books by Vesalius and Valverde in the list were once in Rubens' *cantoor*.<sup>87</sup>

These anatomical sheets strongly suggests, in my opinion, that Rubens' books of medicine should be seriously reconsidered as visual aids. Before examining these books, however, it is crucial to firstly ask whether texts and illustrated books were indeed regarded as a method of learning the mechanism of the human body and whether these books were thought appropriate for artists. Vesalius considered the image as a significant anatomical teaching tool for both physicians and artists. With his *De humani corporis*

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<sup>84</sup> Valverde de Hamusco, 1556; in various editions, one of them by Plantin, Antwerp; see Voet, 1982: 2327-36. For the illustrations of the book, see Bowen and Imhof, 2008: 67-83.

<sup>85</sup> Trans. after Garff and de la Fuente Pedersen, 1988: vol. 1, no. 162, 129-30.

<sup>86</sup> This ambiguity is reinforced by the fact that when Panneels copied drawings after Rubens' book of anatomy, he was very careful to explicitly note it ("annotomibock van rubbens die ick-vant / cantor-hebbe gehaelt").

<sup>87</sup> For the catalogue of Albert Rubens' inventory, see Arents, 2001: 339-66; esp. for Vesalius and Valverde's books: 345 (7kol.1-2), 366 (28kol.1); "Vesalii Opera Anatomica. Basileae 1555. Carta Majori", "Anathomia Vesalii Basilei 1543" in folio, and "Vivae imagines partium corporis humani. Ant. Apud Christop. Plantin. 1566", "Idem Flandrice".

*fabrica*, Vesalius became the first anatomist to use images – more than two hundred woodcuts – as an integral part of his argument.<sup>88</sup> In the preface Vesalius defends this extensive use of pictures: “How much pictures aid the understanding of these things and place a subject before the eyes more precisely than the most explicit language, no one knows who has not had this experience in geometry and other branches of mathematics.”<sup>89</sup> He emphasises that his treatise will satisfy as “many people as possible”, and especially “those who do not always have the opportunity to dissect a human body, or if they do, have a nature so delicate and unsuitable in a doctor...[they] cannot bring themselves actually to attend an occasional dissection.”<sup>90</sup> While Vesalius criticises the physicians who have restricted themselves to theory, refusing hands-on engagement and *autopsia*, he does not equally encourage artists to dissection. Yet, despite this, he still considers them to be among his readership. This is made explicit in his second book: “the membranes apparent in the face and neck of the third table and also the muscular fibers depicted, are more inclined to trouble the painter, sculptor, and the molder, to whose pursuits I wish to be of benefit.”<sup>91</sup> Vesalius perceived his book to be educational for artists, whom he urged to careful study. Artists, he wrote, should:

not be satisfied with an exact knowledge of the superficial muscles; they must also have a detailed acquaintance with the bones, and must make sure they are fully conversant

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<sup>88</sup> The importance of images for Vesalius and the aesthetic value of the illustrations of *De fabrica* have been addressed in several studies. See indicatively Kusakawa, 2012; Cunningham, 1994; Vesalius, 1950. For a comprehensive study on Vesalius, see O’Malley, 1964.

<sup>89</sup> Vesalius, 2003: ‘Vesalius, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*: preface’, <http://vesalius.northwestern.edu/flash.html> (accessed 13 June 2014).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Vesalius, 1999: 5.

with the function of each muscle, so that they may know when they should draw some muscle shorter, or longer, or more protuberant, or more compressed, keeping this axiom always before their eyes.<sup>92</sup>

Vesalius' acknowledgement that not all his readers would attend a dissection may hint at why Rubens was not keen on anatomising with his own hands. He may have had a "delicate nature" and felt uncomfortable in working with dead bodies or/and he might have preferred to compare himself with a physician-philosopher who dispensed with the *taboo* of hands-on experience and restricted himself to theoretical knowledge. Whatever the case, Vesalius believed that for artists the textual study of medicine was sufficient. The influence of the *Fabrica* on the art world can be clearly traced up to the early nineteenth century. The illustrations from both *Fabrica* and *Epitome* (published immediately after *Fabrica*) have been the subject of rich discussions in the history of medicine, especially for their great artistic value.<sup>93</sup>

The evaluation of the influence of Vesalius and Valverde in artistic circles, however, still has to be assessed. Be that as it may, an engraving of Vesalius by Philips Galle (1537-1612) after Jan Stephan van Calcar suggests this influence may have been extensive (1572, Antwerp, published in *Virorum Doctorum de Disciplinis benemerentium Effigies XLIIII*, British Museum; fig. 14). The inscription, under the portrait of Vesalius, states: "Hic Medicis auxit, Pictoribus auxit & artem" ("He increased the art of both, doctors and artists"). Indeed, there is no doubt that the books were extremely popular, especially with

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Kemp, 1970: 288.

the learned artists of the period. Among the one hundred and fifty-four books which are testified in Velázquez's library, the works of both anatomists are listed as *Andrea Besalio medico* and *Composicion del cuerpo humano por Juan de Valverde*.<sup>94</sup> While the highly artistic illustrations of Vesalius' *Fabrica* were expected to appeal to artists, this does not mean that they ignored the text, which provided necessary clarification of the accompanying illustrations. Rubens, as shown above, added the text onto the sheet next to his drawing, while other artists evidenced knowledge of the text through their pictorial images. Titian, for example, shows his familiarity with Vesalius' *Fabrica* and the discussions surrounding it, by drawing a parody of Laocoön and his sons, replacing the human bodies with apes. This is most probably aligned with Vesalius' criticism of Galen's dissections of apes and the larger conclusions he drew for the human body.<sup>95</sup>

This is not to say that every artist studied anatomy and was familiar with medical advances and debates. However, Rubens undoubtedly does not mirror the average early modern artist. His contemporaries did not perceive him merely as a learned painter, a *pictor doctus*, but, as Baudouin notes, a *bene doctus* and a scholar.<sup>96</sup> They referred to him as the "Apelles of our time", "the Prince of Painters", and "the most learned painter of the world".<sup>97</sup> Rubens had attended the Latin School of Rumoldus Verdonck in Antwerp.<sup>98</sup> This classical education provided him not only with fluency in Latin and ancient Greek, but also with the grounding that enabled him to study, keep notes and footnotes, and use texts for

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<sup>94</sup> Ruiz Pérez, 1999: 14-16. Sánchez Cantón, 1925; and, I, 1960.

<sup>95</sup> Janson, 1946: 49-53. See also Janson, 1952: appendix, 355-68, esp. 361.

<sup>96</sup> Baudouin, 2002: 231; Rubens, 1887-1909, II (1898), letter from Franciscus Sweerius to William Camden (1 June 1616): 82.

<sup>97</sup> Noël Sainsbury, 1859: letter from Domenic Baudious to Rubens, 4 October 1611. After Rubens' death Philippe Chifflet wrote to Baltasar I Moretus that Rubens was "le plus sçavant peintre du monde"; Rooses, 1882-83: 218.

<sup>98</sup> Belkin, 1998: 22.

his own purposes. In several cases Rubens provides evidence of his assiduous study by discussing in his letters topics addressed in his books. He gives advice to his correspondent about further sources for research, and, more crucially for my argument, he transfers details and information from texts to paintings, being often inspired by written sources to invent a new painterly topic, as McGrath has shown.<sup>99</sup>

Establishing an explicit relationship, however, between Rubens and a particular book is not an easy task. Frans Baudouin and Prosper Arents have addressed the difficulties of reconstructing Rubens' library, which has been undertaken partly on the basis on the auction catalogue compiled on the occasion of the death of Rubens' son, Albert, in 1657.<sup>100</sup> In his will (dated 24 May, 1640), the artist bequeathed to Albert "all and every one of the books of his library".<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, in the seventeen years between the artist's testament and the inventory of Albert's possessions, Albert may have bought more books, and gifted or sold some others. Tracing the artist's library becomes still more difficult given that in addition to his father's books, Albert had also inherited the books of his maternal grandfather, Jan Brant.<sup>102</sup> Since, therefore, there exists no document listing the contents of the artist's library, it should be kept in mind that it can only be approximately reconstructed. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that Albert and Jan Brant, both being lawyers, their personal collections would have focused mainly on *libri juridici*, or probably *theologici, historici, philosophi* and *humaniores*, and much less on medicine, for which by contrast the artist had expressed a clear interest. This is remarkably evidenced by two other

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<sup>99</sup> McGrath, 1997.

<sup>100</sup> Baudouin, 2002; Arents, 2001. According to Arents (p. 283, note 11), this document is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, I Inventaire 2069.

<sup>101</sup> Génard, 1896a: 136-40.

<sup>102</sup> Génard, 1896b: 227; qt. after Baudouin, 2002; 236. The inventory of Jan Brant was compiled on 19 July 1640.

sources: the *Journal* of Baltasar Moretus I, which records Rubens' purchases between 1613, when he started working for the Plantin House, till his death in 1640; and Rubens' rich correspondence, where he often discusses or refers to books. These two sources are extremely helpful for my discussion since they provide unequivocal information about Rubens' fascinating medical material. After exploring this, the discussion will give an overview of the medical books listed in Albert's inventory.<sup>103</sup>

While Vesalius' books were appealing to artists because of their images, Rubens' holdings show that he was equally interested in medical text. The first medical book, which is recorded by the Plantin *Journal* as being bought by Rubens in 1613, the year of its publication, is *Hygiasticon*, the treatise on dietetics by the Flemish Jesuit Leonardus Lessius (1554-1623).<sup>104</sup> Rubens had already designed the title page of *De iustitia et iure* for Lessius, whom he knew personally. *Hygiasticon*, which will be further discussed in the last chapter, praises moderation and advertises a vegetarian diet as "very easy to be undergone, and such as brings strength and vigour lot in mind and body".<sup>105</sup> The treatise would have been consistent with Rubens' modest habits and the condemnation of gluttony and excesses, though he is not known to have been a vegetarian.

This was not the only book on dietetics that Rubens had in his library. In 1616 he bought Ludovicus Nonnius' *Ichthyophagia, sive de piscium esu commentarius*.<sup>106</sup> His choice of this work seems not coincidental. The *Ichthyophagia* was undoubtedly an innovative

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<sup>103</sup> The three basic sources for my discussion here (Plantin's *Journal*, Rubens' letters, and Albert's catalogue) are succinctly, but very helpfully, listed in Arents, 2001. As early as 1882-83, Max Rooses published a list of the books owned by Rubens that are recorded in the Plantin *Journal*; see Rooses, 1882-83: 176-207. Also, Ruelens and Rooses' *Correspondence* is the basic source about the books Rubens acquired, gifted and discussed.

<sup>104</sup> Arents, 2001: E16.

<sup>105</sup> Lessius, 1613, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., trans. in English, French, German and Spanish; trans. Herbert, 1634: qt. p. 9. For Rubens' title-page, see Judson and van de Velde, 1978: no. 38.

<sup>106</sup> Arents, 2001: E36; Nonnius, 1616.

and influential book on dietetics because of the great significance it gave to fish in the diet. By discussing thirty-seven kinds of fish, Nonnius does not hesitate to adopt a confrontational stance with regard to traditional views that advised avoiding fish because of its supposed watery, phlegmatic quality which could upset the balance of the body.<sup>107</sup> Its author, the Spanish-Portuguese Ludovicus Nonnius, was to systematise the hygiene of food and be considered as the founder of medical dietetics.<sup>108</sup> As a dietician, Nonnius supported moderation in meat-eating and accentuated the nutritional value of fish, fruit and vegetables.

Rubens' friendship with Nonnius has been frequently discussed by scholars. The frontispieces the artist provided for Nonnius' books, the medical advice he sought from him, as well as the portrait Rubens painted of the physician holding his much-praised *Diaeticon* (c. 1627, National Gallery, London), suggest that Rubens and Nonnius were well acquainted (figs 15-16).<sup>109</sup> At some point Rubens probably also acquired the *Diaeticon*. In 1627 he sent this book, along with some others, to Pierre Dupuy.<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, while in the accompanying letter Rubens noted of the other books that "I

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<sup>107</sup> Albala, 2002: 44. For Nonnius and the place of fish in the diet of the seventeenth-century Spanish Netherlands, see Albala, 2008: 38-44. For the nutritional value of fish in the early modern period, see Albala, 1998: 9-19.

<sup>108</sup> For a good insight into dietetics and Nonnius, see Tricot, 1996: 251-69.

<sup>109</sup> Rubens and his workshop designed the frontispieces for Nonnius's books on numismatics (*Commentarius in Nomismata Imp. Julii, Augusti et Tiberii* (1620), *Commentarius in Huberti Golzii Graeciam, Insulas, et Asiam Minorem* (1644)) and the second edition of *Diaeticon* (1645) (in which the god of medicine, Aesculapius, receives the offer of vegetables, fruits, fish and meat from other gods, thus emphasising the food's nutritional role). It should be noted though that the former frontispiece of *Nomismata* was first published for Jacob de Bie's book on numismatics (1617), while the later for Hubert Goltzius' Greek coins with Nonnius's comments (1618), and they were copied for the above books of Nonnius; Judson and van de Velde, 1978: 72, 188, 201-203.

For Rubens' personal contact and consultancy with Nonnius and with other physicians, see Baudouin, 1989: 261-82. For Rubens' portrait of Nonnius as a representation of the friendship between them, see Bomford, 2003: 229-57, esp. pp. 246-52; and Rupert Martin, 1986: 7-20. The first evidence for Rubens' friendship with a physician and humanist comes from his early period in Italy (1600-1608), and particularly from 1606 when the most famous physician in Rome, Johan Faber, cured him of pleurisy and by way of thanks Rubens painted a cock and a portrait for him; Huemer, 1996: 4-10.

<sup>110</sup> *Diaeticon sive de re cibaria libri IV* (1627) addresses in four books a healthy diet, asserting that fruit, vegetables, oil, fish and meat, salt, wine and mineral water contribute to a balanced diet.



send them more for the sake of sending something, than because I consider them worthy of your curiosity”, he referred separately in the margin to Nonnius’ book: “The little work of Louis Nonnius is considered a good book, in the opinion of our physicists.”<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, this comment suggests that the artist was well acquainted with discussions taking place within the medical network of Europe. It is not coincidental that several physicians were among his friends and belonged to the intellectual circles he frequented in Rome, Antwerp and London, as further discussed in chapter 3.

The bust of Hippocrates in Nonnius’ portrait may not only constitute the source of the latter’s inspiration for the *Diaeteticon*, or allude to the antiquarian interest of both artist and physician. It may also suggest that both men acknowledged the authority of Hippocrates’ medicine. Plantin’s *Journal* evidences that in 1615 Rubens bought Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms* in octavo, published at Leiden in 1609 by Plantin’s son-in-law Franciscus Raphelengius.<sup>112</sup> This book, which includes a commentary by the Leiden professor of medicine, Johannes Heurnius (1543-1601), was first published in 1601 and re-edited in 1607, 1609 and 1611. The fact that the Latin book had a parallel Greek translation supports, according to McGrath, the argument that Rubens was learning Greek at that time.<sup>113</sup> This might be further evidenced by the inscription of Hippocrates’ name in Greek characters in the portrait. However, that Rubens selected Hippocrates to study Greek clearly indicates his interest in Hippocratic medicine, which by the second half of the sixteenth century was fundamental to medical studies. During the sixteenth century Hippocrates’ texts had been fervently collected, translated and printed by medical

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<sup>111</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 119 (12 August 1627): 195.

<sup>112</sup> Arents, 2001: E26, 143.

<sup>113</sup> McGrath, 1997: 63.

humanists with numerous early modern commentaries.<sup>114</sup> By the end of the century Hippocrates' *Aphorisms* had outshone Galen's authority.<sup>115</sup>

Rubens' interest in Hippocrates and academic medicine is further illustrated by a letter dated 9 September 1627, the same year as the publication of *Diaeteticon* and of Nonnius' portrait. In this letter Rubens thanks Pierre Dupuy for sending him the book *De Tempore humani partus*, which has been identified as the work by Rodolphe le Maitre on Hippocrates' *Aphorisms* (1613).<sup>116</sup> Certainly, it is not coincidental that a similar presence of Hippocrates can be found in Albert Rubens' library. Here the inventory records: "Opera Hippocratis cum Comment. Foesii. 2 Voll. Gr Lat. Francof. 1595"; "Thriverius in Aphorismos Hippocratis" (in quarto); "Hippocrates De Flutibus cum Comm. Adriani Alemanni" (in octavo), and "Aphorismi Hippocratis Gr. lat".<sup>117</sup>

The last work repeats the 1609 edition of Heurnius' commentary, as recorded in Plantin's *Journal*, while a persistent interest in the *Aphorisms* is evidenced by the commentary of the famous physician of the Southern Netherlands, Jeremias Thriverius (1504-64).<sup>118</sup> A more general interest in Hippocratic medicine is indicated by *De flatibus liber* (1557), the famous study on climate and seasonal changes with the commentaries of Adrianus Alemanus, as well as the *Opera Hippocratis* of the French physician Anutius Foesius (1528-95), which is one of the first editions with a Latin translation of the Greek text.

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<sup>114</sup> Cook, 2006: 411. For "Hippocrates in the Renaissance", see Nutton, 1989: 420-39. See also Smith, 1979; and Cantor, 2002. For the revival of ancient anatomy during the sixteenth century, see Cunningham, 1997.

<sup>115</sup> Nutton, 1989: esp. 422, 431-32.

<sup>116</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 123 (9 September 1627): 200-201, 477; Arents, 2001: 238, H56; Le Maitre, 1613.

<sup>117</sup> Arents, 2001: 345-46 (7kol.2-2, 8kol.2-2).

<sup>118</sup> Thriverius, 1551.

Besides the books on dietetics and Hippocratic medicine, the *Journal* testifies that in 1619, the year of its publication, Rubens purchased the German anatomist Johannes Remmelin's (1583-1632) *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*, a book popular for its illustrations. The book, seemingly the only publication by Remmelin, had great success, as is suggested by its several editions and translations.<sup>119</sup> We can reasonably assume that the highly delicate folding illustrations fascinated the artistic community. The images, which were drawn by Remmelin and engraved by the Augsburg artist Lucas Kilian (1579-1637), reveal the structure of the human body in successive layers from the surface to its numerous organs.<sup>120</sup> Eight separate plates are cut and pasted together to make three large folding plates with fifteen layers to "cut up" the male and female bodies. Particular attention is paid to the upper part of the bodies, as well as the brain, uterus and eye. Remmelin's illustrations understand the human body as a microcosm and image of God. The depiction of the crucifixion next to the male brain articulates, as does also the sun, the divine role of medicine and the idea of the body as the "catoptrum microcosmicum". Thus the exploration of the human body is suggested as the means to reach to the understanding of its "catoptrum", the macrocosm and divine wisdom (figs 17-19).<sup>121</sup>

We can further suppose that Rubens also perceived these anatomical/artistic illustrations as promoting a divine role for artists similar to that of physicians. The artist after all attempts to approach the divine wisdom of the microcosm of the human body

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<sup>119</sup> For a bibliography of Remmelin, see Russell, 1991.

<sup>120</sup> For an image library, see: 'Johann Remmelin: Catoptrum Microcosmicum' <http://sdr.lib.uiowa.edu/exhibits/imaging/remmelin/index.html> (accessed 13 June 2014).

<sup>121</sup> The sun at the upper part of the engraving, between the male and the female body, is circled by the Greek words: "Ο ΙΑΤΡΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΟΣ ΙΣΟΘΕΟΣ", which means in literal translation "THE DOCTOR PHILOSOPHER GODLIKE". This emphasises, therefore, both the divine nature of the medical profession, and that medicine is not just a practical profession but demands the deep knowledge of a philosopher. For a discussion on the religious iconography of the title page, see Mitchell, 2007: 134-37.

(discussed in more detail in chapter 3). As the physician uses anatomy to separate and cut up the body (in ancient Greek *anatemnein* means “to cut up separately”), in order to understand its function, Rubens’ knowledge of anatomy would have helped him the other way round, namely to build little by little the human structure, as Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72) had long ago advised artists to do: “Before dressing a man we first draw him nude, then we enfold him in draperies. So in painting the nude we place first his bones and muscles which we then cover with flesh so that it is not difficult to understand where each muscle is beneath.”<sup>122</sup>

Additionally, Rubens’ more general interests in medicine are made tangible by his ownership of the *Opera* of the famous Italian physician Joannes Argenterius (1513-72), bought, or probably bound, in 1628.<sup>123</sup> The work explores disease and also contains Argenterius’ commentary on Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms*. Argenterius was well known for his criticism of Galen, which was seen as an “attack” on the medical establishment.<sup>124</sup> The fact that in 1628 Rubens was suffering from “gout”, to such an extent that he was afraid of dying, might suggest that the book helped him better understand the disease and its cure.<sup>125</sup>

One more book by an Italian Renaissance physician must also have been of much interest to Rubens. In his essay *De Imitatione Statuarum*, written in Latin during his stay in Italy, Rubens refers to *De Arte Gymnastica* (Venice, 1569) by the medical humanist

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<sup>122</sup> Alberti, 1436, bk II: 41; trans. Spencer, 1956: 71.

<sup>123</sup> Arents, 2001: E149; Argenterius, 1606 (republished 1610).

<sup>124</sup> Siraisi, 1990a; Siraisi, 2001: 328-55.

<sup>125</sup> See here ch. 2: 109, esp. fn. 309.

Girolamo Mercuriale (1530-1606), court physician to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in Rome.<sup>126</sup> Rubens writes:

Causa praecipua qua nostri aevi homines differunt ab Antiquis est ignavia & inexercitatum vivendi genus; quippe esse, bibere nulla exercitandi corporis cura...Contra antiquitus omnes quotidie in palaestris & gymnasiis exercebantur violenter ut vere dicam, nimis ad sudorem, ad lassitudinem extremam usque. Vide Mercurialem de Arte Gymnastica, quam varia laborum genera, quam difficilia, quam robusta habuerint.

(The chief reason why men of our age are different from the ancients is sloth and want of exercise; for most men give no other exercise to their body but eating and drinking...In antiquity, on the other hand, men exercised most vigorously every day in palaestrae and gymnasia working up a sweat and fatiguing themselves. One need only read Mercurialis' *De Arte Gymnastica* which describes the different difficult and strenuous exercises that were performed to give the body a proper workout.)<sup>127</sup>

Mercuriale discusses physical exercises, equipment and settings. He shows how in antiquity gymnastics shaped a healthy body and mind. Hence, Mercuriale becomes the first early modern doctor who argued for “medical gymnastics” and for the value of exercise as both a preventive and curative. In *Gymnastica*, as Siraisi notes, Mercuriale portrays the

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<sup>126</sup> For an extensive discussion on this essay, see Thielemann, forthcoming, 2015.

<sup>127</sup> De Piles, 1708: 145-46. The essay was transcribed and translated into French by the aesthetician Roger de Piles and published for the first time in 1708 in his *Cours de peinture par principes*. Trans. Thielemann, forthcoming, 2015. See also here ch. 3, p. 157.

ancient world as an antithesis to the modern, rather than simply writing a practical advice manual.<sup>128</sup> Interestingly, in the title page of the second edition (1573), Mercuriale notes that the book is useful not only for physicians, but also for everybody with an interest in antiquity or in preserving health: “Opus non modo medicis, verum etiam omnibus antiquarum rerum cognoscendarum, & valetudinis consetuandae studiosis admodum utile” (“A work useful not only to doctors but also to all those desirous of learning about ancient matters or preserving their health”).<sup>129</sup> The drawings by the Neapolitan artist Pirro Ligorio (c. 1510-83), which first appeared in this second edition, would have appealed to artists, especially those such as Rubens with an interest in healthy and muscular bodies (fig. 20). It is not known which edition Rubens consulted, or whether he acquired this book during his stay in Italy, but *Gymnastica* was still present in Albert’s library and listed in his inventory under the category *Medici in Quarto & Philosophi*.<sup>130</sup>

One more noteworthy category of medical book that illustrates Rubens’ wider interest in the medicinal sub-categories of the period is recorded in the *Journal* between 1603 and 1616. This is the area of animal physiology, represented in Rubens’ library by the extremely popular encyclopedic works by the Italian Ulyssis Aldrovandi (1522-1605) and the Swiss Conrad Gessner (1516-65). Both naturalists explored quadrupeds, fishes, snakes, insects and animal remains.<sup>131</sup> These books, as well as books on botany (such as the

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<sup>128</sup> Siraisi, 2003: 231-51.

<sup>129</sup> Mercuriale, 1573: title page; trans. Mercuriale, 2008: 865, fn. 7.

<sup>130</sup> Arents, 2001: 345, (7kol.2).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.: E1, E2, E6, E12, E18, E19, E40: Ulysses Aldrovandus, *Ulyssis Aldrovandi Historia de Avibus; De insectis; De piscibus & Cetis; De Mollibus Crustaceis Testaceis; Historia De Quadrupedibus Solidipedibus*. Conradus Gesnerus, *De serpentibus*.

Gessner’s five-volume *Historiae animalium*, (1551–58; fifth volume: 1587; followed by a pictorial edition, *Icones*, 1553, 1560) is considered the beginning of modern zoology. For the *Historiae animalium*, see Pinon, 2005: 241-67. For the significance of the image in Gessner’s work, see Kusukawa, 2012, ch. 7, 8. For a comparison between Aldrovandi and Gessner, see Fischel, 2009. Gessner is also known as the father of

monumental *Hortus Eystettensis* by the Nuremberg apothecary and botanist Basilius Besler (1561-1629)), can be related to Rubens' general interests and painterly projects.<sup>132</sup>

Besides books on dietetics, anatomy, physiology and general medicine, the *Journal* also lists a book on spiritual medicine by the French Jesuit Etienne Binet (1569-1639), discussed in more detail in the last chapter. The *Remedes souverains contre la peste et la mort soudaine* (1628) gives advice in consoling and healing the soul afflicted by pestilence.<sup>133</sup> Rubens bought or bound this book in 1632, a period in which the plague ravaged in Antwerp and beyond. We can speculate that he was searching for an alternative medicine as a consolation for the death of his first wife Isabella Brant, who three years previously had probably died from plague.<sup>134</sup>

The books referred to so far, while clearly illuminating Rubens' interest in medical matters, undoubtedly cannot fully recreate either his medical library or his textual, medical knowledge. Certainly, the artist had access to many more medical books in Plantin's house, in the private libraries of his intellectual friends, as well as in the court libraries in Europe.<sup>135</sup> Besides Plantin's house, other printing houses in Antwerp and beyond should be considered, while some purchases surely took place during Rubens' eight-year stay in Italy

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bibliography, for his attempt to make a list of all the books ever written. For Gessner as bibliographer, see Wellisch 1975, 7: 151-247. See also Serrai and Cochetti, 1990.

<sup>132</sup> Arents, 2001: E33, Besler, 1613. McGrath (1997, I: 61) has interestingly noted that Adrovandi's books were bought by Rubens in the same period he was working on the hunting series.

<sup>133</sup> Arents, 2001: E161.

<sup>134</sup> Baudouin, 1989: 272.

<sup>135</sup> However, as Thøfner's research (2000) has shown, the Royal Library in Brussels was clearly focused on religious treatises and devotional texts, at least for the years between 1598 and 1617. It is doubtful that the very limited medical sources of the library were consulted by Rubens, who seems to have owned more medical books than the library, which from its foundation in 1559 until 1617 included only forty-five books of this nature. Even more striking is that during the first two decades of the reign of the Archdukes, Albert and Isabella (1598-1617), no book on medicine entered the library. Nevertheless, as Thøfner persuasively argues, the decline in the number of science books, in sharp contrast to the devotional books, does not imply a Court policy, but mainly suggests the pattern of supply from the printing houses, as well as pilfering on the part of Habsburg officials.

(1600-1608), when he executed most of his anatomical studies. Other books may have been purchased in England or France. Furthermore, a considerable number of books must be attributed to the very common habit among humanists of exchanging or giving books as gifts, as we can see by the copy of Hippocrates' *Aphorisms* sent by Pierre Dupuy to Rubens, or the *Diaeteticon* that Rubens gave to Dupuy.

Studies seeking to reconstruct Rubens' library have shown that the artist probably amassed around five hundred books. Not only its size, but also its great diversity of subjects and the prevalence of Latin suggest that the library was more appropriate for a scholar than an artist.<sup>136</sup> While I do not wish to explore in detail the books listed in the inventory of Albert Rubens because of the ambiguities involved, they nevertheless present some larger possible conclusions. The number of medical books in this catalogue is considerable and surprising, given that their owners, either Peter Paul or Albert, were not physicians. Yet, these are outdone by the books on theology, law, history and philosophy. To speak in numbers, there are fifty-five titles listed as *libri medici*, or sixty-six if we break them into separate volumes. Adding the five "Misselanea in Folio" medical books, plus a Greek-Latin medical dictionary, the number climbs to sixty-one books (or seventy-six volumes).<sup>137</sup>

The question arises then of how common or uncommon was Rubens' library? Jan Bialostocki's study is still the only one, as far as I know, which attempts to give an overall

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<sup>136</sup> Baudouin, 2002: 243-45; Arents: 2001.

<sup>137</sup> In the "Misselanea" related to medicine I include: "Anathomia Vesalii Basilei 1543", "Historia Naturae Nierembergi Carta Regali", "Opera Gesneri de Animalibus 3. Voll. ex edit Tiguri", "Herbarius Dodonei edit Plantini", "Herbarius Matheoli ex edit Valgrisi Italiae", "Oeuvres de Pline 2. Voll. edit de la Salamandre 1562"; and "Lexicon Medicum Graeco latinum"; Arents, 2001: 359, 366 (21kol.2, 28kol.1-2).



idea of artists' libraries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>138</sup> By drawing on selected sources, Bialostocki concludes that “the library of the average painter was extremely poor”, while “the doctrine of the doctus artifex seems to have been more of an ideal than a reality.”<sup>139</sup> While for Bialostocki Rubens is “the one” among his contemporaries “who came closest to the ideal of the learned artist”, he fails to note Rubens' well-stocked library. Being less familiar with material beyond artists' inventories and sale catalogues, he erroneously says that Rubens “owned very few books”.<sup>140</sup> However, Bialostocki has proved right in arguing that “Ghiberti, Poussin, Alberti, Leonardo, and Dürer belonged to a rather special category of artists: to those who were at the same time scholars and writers, philosophers and humanists”.<sup>141</sup>

More recent studies have shown that a learned artist might possess as few as fifty-four books, like Andrea Sacchi (1599-1661); Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), who was well known for his erudition, had only nineteen. Numbers are indicative, but as argued by Heiko Damm, Michael Thimann and Claus Zittel, “an artist who possessed only a few books according to the surviving records does not necessarily mean that we are confronted with an uneducated artist, just as we cannot automatically conclude that an artist who owned many books was highly learned.”<sup>142</sup> Amy Golahny, for example, in her study on the twenty-two books of Rembrandt shows that, despite his limited library, Rembrandt looked at these books with erudition and inventiveness.<sup>143</sup> Rubens' library then can be compared to the exceptional cases, such as the Delft painter Pieter Jansz Saenredam (470 books,

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<sup>138</sup> Bialostocki, 1988.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*: esp. 156, 158.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*: 159.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*: 156.

<sup>142</sup> Damm, Thimann and Zittel, 2013: 28.

<sup>143</sup> Golahny, 2003.

1597-1665), the Italian architect Francesco Borromini (459 books, 1599-1667), and the Italian sculptor Domenico Guidi (375 books, 1625-1701).<sup>144</sup> In the Antwerp of Rubens' time, Baudouin shows that only two libraries could be compared to Rubens' in size: the widow of a rich merchant, Isabella de la Vega, owned the largest with 770 books; the physician Jean Ferreulx bequeathed his library to the city of Antwerp.<sup>145</sup>

Likewise, the number of Rubens' medical books surpasses by far the quantity of similar books in the library of a typical learned artist. Of the ninety-nine books owned by Durante Alberti only one was on medicine, the *Segreti di Medicina*, and of Velazquez's 154 books only three were medical, namely the *Composicion del cuerpo humano por Juan de Valverde*, *Diálogos de la Medicina* and *Andrea Besalio medico*.<sup>146</sup> Even if we assume that only half of the medical books in Albert's inventory were in his father's library (which seems doubtful to me), it still remains a significant number. And if this assumption looks too speculative, we could even consider only the books I discussed above, as testified by the *Journal* or his letters, which still gives a number far above the average for an artist.

It would be interesting to compare the information given by the *Journal* with books owned by Rubens' friend, the humanist and burgomaster Nicolaas Rockox (1560-1640). Unfortunately the sale catalogue of Rockox's inventory does not name the books, only

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<sup>144</sup> Damm, Thimann and Zittel, 2013: 26.

<sup>145</sup> Baudouin, 2002: 243.

<sup>146</sup> Soergel Panofsky, 1996: 367-80, esp. 372: The *Segreti di Medicina* perhaps refers to *Maravigliosi segreti di medicina* (Rome, 1586; Venice, 1595) by Gio. Battista Zapata (Rome c. 1520-after 1586). The title could, however, also refer to *Secreti di medicina mirabilissimi del poco eccellente e tutto ignorante il dottor Braghetton Filosofo da tartufi, astrologo da boccali, e soprintendente di bussolotti della mostarda cremonese*, Florence, 1575. The latter was a parody of physicians and medications by the eccentric Bolognese Giulio Cesare Croce (1550-1609).

roughly states that he had more than two hundred.<sup>147</sup> Again the archives of the Plantin *Journal* have provided useful evidence. While medical books are listed, these are specifically popular books on botany and herbals of the Flemish physicians and botanists Rembert Dodoens (Rembertus Dodonaeus, 1517-85), Carolus Clusius (1526-1609), Matthias de Lobel (Lobelius, 1538-1616) and the Antwerpian Aegidius Everaerts.<sup>148</sup> The rest of the medical books include *La Gouvernement de santé* (published Paris, 1600, bought 1602) by the French physician Nicolas Abraham de la Framboisiere (1560-1636), which addresses several diseases and their cures; the Italian scholar and polymath Giovanni Della Porta's (1535-1615) *De Occultis Litterarum Notis* (published 1593, bought 1606), also listed in Albert's inventory as discussed below; and Lessius' *Hygiasticon* (bought in 1620) which, as noted, Rubens had also bought from Plantin.<sup>149</sup> This short list may indicate a moderate interest in medicine. It is nevertheless much restricted when compared to those books owned by Rubens and his son.

What is also significant and noted repeatedly is the unprecedented preference of Rubens for the Latin language.<sup>150</sup> It was not usual for an artist to know Latin, but even in this case, the preference had always been for the vernacular.<sup>151</sup> Rubens' attendance at the Latin School was not exceptional. After finishing, he continued practising his Latin with great diligence, which made him proficient not only in reading, but also in speaking and writing. His excellence in Latin gave him access to scholarly books. This was enhanced by

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<sup>147</sup> Fabri, Imhof and van de Velde, 2005: 99. The document is in the Archief van het OCMW, Antwerpen, "Inventaris van het sterhuis van Nicolaas Rockox opgemaakt door notaris David van der Soppen op 19en 20 december 1640".

<sup>148</sup> Fabri, Imhof and van de Velde, 2005: 42-44, 47, 53. These books are: Clusius' *Aromatum* (1593), Everaerts' *De herba panacea* (1587), De Lobel's *Kruydtboeck* (1581) and Dodoens' *Stirpium historiae* (1616).

<sup>149</sup> Fabri, Imhof and van de Velde: 2005: 48, 50-52,54

<sup>150</sup> Baudouin, 2002: 238; Golehny, 2003: ch. 7, esp. 217; Damm, Thimann and Zittel, 2013: 49-50.

<sup>151</sup> Damm, Thimann and Zittel, 2013: 49-52.

his financial prosperity and his work in the Plantin house, for which he designed title pages and instead of a salary, he chose to be supplied with books.<sup>152</sup> Needless to say, the official and most common language for medical publications was Latin. All the medical books referred to above were in Latin (besides Binet's *Remedes souverains*), and of the sixty-two medical books in Albert's inventory, only three were in Dutch and two in French.<sup>153</sup>

Interestingly, the great diversity of medical books in Albert's inventory reflects the variety of the aforementioned books, which were testified by the *Journal* and Rubens' letters. They ranged from works on anatomy, physiology and dietetics, general medicine and encyclopaedic works on animals. Besides Nonnius, Hippocrates, Mercuriale, Adrovandi and Gessner, Albert's inventory lists the books of anatomy by Vesalius and Valverde, as well as Vesalius' book on the china root and its therapeutic use in the case of syphilis. The landmark study on the circulation of blood by the English physician William Harvey (1578-1657) was also there, as also the innovative works by the French physician Jean Fernel (1497-1558) on disease and spirit etiology.<sup>154</sup> Against the contemporary overemphasis on Hippocrates, Galenic medicine is also present with the treatise by the Italian physician, Giovanni Battista Selvatico (1550-1621).<sup>155</sup> Controversy amongst early modern physicians was common and represented in the catalogue by the books of the Italian polymath Gerolamo Cardano (1501-76), whose theories attacked Aristotle. In turn Cardano was attacked by the Italian humanist and physician Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484-

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<sup>152</sup> McGrath, 1997: 56.

<sup>153</sup> In Dutch: "Cruytboeck van Matthias de Lobel. 't Antwerpen by Christoffel Plantyn" and "Medecyn-Boek van Carolus Battus". Also, under the Latin book "Vivae imagines partium corporis humani. Ant. apud Christop. Plantin. 1566" is noted "Idem Flandrice". In French: "*Commentaires de Mattheole sur Dioscoride à Lyon 1574*", and "Oeuvres de Pline..."

<sup>154</sup> Arents, 2001: 345-46 (7kol.2, 8kol.1). These books are listed as "Harvoeus de Motu Cordis" (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1628); "Fernelius de Abditis Rerum Causis" (1548); for Fernel and esp. for a comparison with Cardano, see Siraisi, 1997: 12, 158-61. For a general study on Fernel, see Sherrington, 1946.

<sup>155</sup> Arents, 2001: 345 (7kol.2); "Sylvatici Historiae Medicinales Galeni" (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1605).

1558).<sup>156</sup> A further interest in diet and food can be noticed with the cookery books of the Roman Caelius Apicius and the Dutch Carolus Battus.<sup>157</sup>

Albert's inventory offers new information regarding the category of medical botany. The list includes some of the most popular writers of the period: the German physician and botanist Leonhart Fuchs (1501-66), Dodoens, De Lobel (Lobelius, 1538-1616) and Della Porta (the last three writers, as noted, were also found in Rockox's library), as well as the veterinary book by the French physician and botanist Jean Ruel (1474-1537).<sup>158</sup> Also, to be found are books on the female body, on procreation, obstetrics and embryology, such as *De Secretis* by the German Dominican friar and Catholic Saint Albertus Magnus (c. 1193/1206-1280), and the innovative *De Formatrice Foetus* (1620) by the Antwerpian physician and professor of Leiden University (and later of Louvain University), Thomas Fienus (1567-1631).<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Listed as "Cardanus de Subtilitate" (1550) and "De Rerum Varietate" (1557); and "Scaliger Adversus Card. de Subtilitate"; Arents, 2001: 346 (8kol.2). For Cardano, see further Siraisi, 1997. For the controversy between Cardano and Scaliger, see Maclean, 1984: 231-52.

<sup>157</sup> Arents, 2001: 345 (7kol.1-2); "Caelius Apicius de re Culinaria" and "Medecyn-Boeck van Carolus Battus"; *De re culinaria* is a collection of Roman cookery recipes, dated between 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> c. and attributed to Caelius Apicius; see further Apicius, 1977. Battus' book must be the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. of the Dutch translation of the German *Artzney-Buch* by Christopher Wirtzung (c. 1505-71). This edition contains Battus's *Cockboek*, first published as C. Battus, *Eenen seer schoonen, ende excellenten Coc-boek, inhoudende alderleye wel geexperimenteerde cokagien, van gebraedt, ghesoden, Pasteyen, Taerten, Toerten, Vlaeyjen, Saussen, Sopen, ende diergelijcke: Ooc diversche Confeyturen ende Drancken*, etc. (Dordrecht, 1593). For a modern transcription of the book, see Battus, *Het 'Kock-Boeck'*, 1991. It should be noted though that the recipes in cookery books were very costly and were addressed more to the upper classes.

<sup>158</sup> Arents, 2001: 345-36 (7kol.1-2, 8kol.1), 366 (28kol. 2); "Leonardi Fucksii Historia Stirpium. Optimè illuminates" (1542), "Cruytboek van Matthias de Lobel. 'tAntwerpen by Cristoffel Plantyn" (1581), "Commentaires de Mattheole sur Dioscoride à Lyon 1574", "Joannis Baptistae Portae Phytognomica" (it groups plants according to their geographical location, and pioneers study in mycology), as well as his book on agriculture "Villa" (1592), "Ruelli Medicina Veterinaria" (1530, compiles and translates from Greek to Latin a collection of recipes concerning veterinary medicine); plus from "Appendix, Misselanea in Folio", "Herbarius Dodonei edit Plantini" (1533), "Herbarius Matheoli ex edit Valgrisi Italiae". For Fuchs *Historia*, see Meyer, Emmart Trueblood and Heller, 1999; and Kusukawa, 2012: ch. 5, 6.

<sup>159</sup> *De Secretis mulierum*, which was very popular during the Middle Ages, explores the female sexuality and reproduction. The authorship is nowadays disputed. For a contemporary translation and commentary see Lemay, 1992. Fienus' *De Formatrice*, dedicated to the court physician of Philip IV of Spain, Franciscus Paz,

Most striking is the presence of numerous books on alchemy, pharmacology and the occult by Della Porta, the Majorcan Franciscan and polymath Ramón Lull (c. 1232-1315), the German-Swiss physician Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, 1493-1541), Scribonius Largus (first century AD) a Roman pharmacologist, and two anonymous books.<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, since there is not enough evidence to testify that Rubens directly encountered these books, I do not wish to consider them in more detail in the present discussion. Yet, it is important to note that all the medical books of the inventory were published during the artist's lifetime. While this objective cannot be analysed in the short limits of this discussion, let me refer only to an interesting case which is noted by the book on Rockox's *Bibliothek*. In this, it is suggested that the presence of Della Porta's book on cryptography, *De Occultis Litterarum Notis*, in the Rockox library was due to the encounter between Rockox and the great admirer of Della Porta, Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc.<sup>161</sup> The popularity which Della Porta enjoyed in the artist's circle may explain his numerous books in the sale catalogue of Albert Rubens.<sup>162</sup>

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and the Archdukes of the Southern Netherlands, owes its novelty to its attempt to prove – contra Galen and Aristotle – that the seed is not animated before conception. See further Papy, 1999a.

<sup>160</sup> Arents, 2001: 345-46 (7kol.1-2, 8kol.1-2); “Raymondi Lulli Vade Mecum”, “Joan, Battistae Portae De Distillationibus” (1608, on chemical experiments and observations), “Theophrastus Paracelsus de Vita Longa” (both chemical and herbal; on the treatment of diseases such as gout, leprosy, epilepsy, syphilis and cancer; written in 1526-27, originally in German, printed posthumously between 1560-70; see Willard, 2011: 347-80); “Scribonii Largi Compositiones Medicae” (on antique pharmacology), “Ars Alchymiae diversorum Auctorem”, “Ars Chemica Anonymi”. Also, on occult and “magic”: “Opera Roberti Flud. 3. Voll. Cum Fig.” (on geomancy; Robert Fludd, 1574-1637, English doctor and alchemist), “Levinus Lemnius de Miraculis occultis Naturae” (1559, Antwerp; Dutch physician, 1505-1568), “Baranzani Novae Opiniones Physicae” (1619), “Valesius de Sacra Philosophia” (1600, Franciscus Valesius / Francisco de Vallés, 1525-1592, Spanish physician), “Joannis Baptistae Portae Magia Naturalis” (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1585, and expanded to the extremely popular twenty books in 1589), “De occultis Litterarum Notis” (or *De furtivis litterarum notis*, 1563), and “Physionomia caelestis” (1603), the anonymous “Enchiridion Physicae Restitutae” (1623, his authorship is attributed to Jean d’Espagnet, 1564-1637), and “Goclenii Mirabilia Naturae” (1625, Rodolphus Goclenius, 1547-1628, professor at Marburg).

<sup>161</sup> Fabri, Imhof and van de Velde, 2005: cat. 35; Findlen, 1994: 227-28. Della Porta's portrait was included in Peiresc's picture gallery; see Miller, 2000: 6.

<sup>162</sup> The influence on Rubens of Della Porta's *Physiognomonica*, which is listed in the sale catalogue, has been argued by Meganck, 2007: 57-59.

A last noteworthy observation concerns the diversity of the authors. So far, it has become obvious that Rubens had in his hands books from throughout Europe written by authors of diverse nationality and occupation – mostly physicians, but also ecclesiastic persons. The diversity of the religious background is remarkable for a tumultuous period of religious struggle. While all of them were Christian, with the majority being Catholic, the number of Protestants or Calvinists is significant. Some books had even been banned and were characterised as “heretical” or “diabolical”. Significantly, Rummelin was Protestant, the French physician Sebastian Basso was Calvinist, Gessner was Zwinglian, and Fuchs was Lutheran.<sup>163</sup> Despite being Catholics, Aldrovandi was arrested for heresy in 1549, Della Porta was examined by the Inquisition around 1578 and his philosophical works were banned between 1592 and 1598, while Cardano was accused of heresy in 1570 and his books *De subtilitate rerum* and *De varietate rerum* were prohibited. Paracelsus also had some of his books banned. This does not mean that copies of such texts were not available, but Inquisitorial inspections of libraries were frequent.<sup>164</sup> Aldrovandi had his library repeatedly inspected and many of his books were confiscated, among them those by Cardano and Della Porta.<sup>165</sup>

Could this suggest that Rubens intentionally suppressed information about encountering some of these books? Could some of them have passed secretly into his hands? Unfortunately, we cannot answer this, but a letter by Rubens suggests that this scenario should be kept in mind. In a letter from 1622 to Pieter van Veen, Rubens expresses an interest in having a look at the “little anonymous work on the Universal

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<sup>163</sup> The book listed by Basso is “Bassonis Philosophia Naturalis adversus Aristotelem”; Arents, 2001: 346 (8kol.2).

<sup>164</sup> Kusukawa (2012: 91) notes that while both Fuchs’ and Gessner’s books were banned, even popes and Catholic bishops owned them.

<sup>165</sup> Findlen, 2012: 33.

Theory” published by Pieter’s brother and Rubens’ teacher, Otto van Veen.<sup>166</sup> The book has been identified as *Conclusiones Physicae et Theologicae* (1621), which explores Paracelsian theories. In 1630 the Leuven theologians accused it of being “diabolical” and ordered it burned.<sup>167</sup> Hence, Rubens promised to “keep this favor a complete secret, without speaking of it to a living soul, in case secrecy is necessary.”<sup>168</sup> The fact that Rubens approached Pieter rather than Otto himself may show that he wished to be discreet about the author of an otherwise anonymous book.

The great diversity of authors and books, as well as the interest in both antique and contemporary medicine and its current debates, reveal Rubens as a bibliophile with fervent interest in medicine. Additionally and more importantly for my argument, the books discussed above would have contributed to some extent to a more thorough understanding and a wider scientific, cultural, social and religious perception of the early modern human body, and probably to the adoption of an eclectic medical view similar to that of his physician-friend Theodore de Mayerne, as will be analysed in chapter 3. Under a process of *aemulatio*, the knowledge provided by these printed sources would have provided a large variety of artistic choices for the representation of human bodies and the rendering of individual physicalities. If the books were indeed perceived as “*animi medica*”, as Justus Lipsius wrote in his popular treatise on libraries, then the *libri medici* could open a window to the early modern understanding of the unity of body, mind and soul.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 48 (19 June 1622): 88.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.: 447; and Meganck, 2007: 57.

<sup>168</sup> Rubens, 1995, letter 48: 88.

<sup>169</sup> Lipsius, 1607 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1602): 10; Lipsius here refers to the inscription “*ψυχῆς ἰατρεῖον*”, which was thought to have been over the entrance of the first private library to be owned by a king, Osymanduas of Egypt. The English translation by Cotton Dana (1907), “Here is Medicine for the Mind” (p. 33), is quite



Arguing for a textual analysis of Rubens' bodies does not imply a textual rather than visual methodology. Instead, while working closely with both words and images, the methodology I follow in this thesis is aligned with the approach held by the editors of the book *The Artist as Reader*:

The path of interpretation should not proceed from the artist's library to the picture...to establish causal relationships of inspiration or illustration. We should instead start conversely with viewing the picture. ...targeted possible literary sources and possible image-text relationships. From the image to the library, to the manuscript, to the stock of knowledge of the epoch, and back again.<sup>170</sup>

Rubens' paintings, anatomical drawings and close work with texts and images suggest that we need to go back to the primary sources circulating within the artist's network. After exploring the image-text relationship we should reconsider whether, and how, medical concepts might have contributed to the genesis, formulation and elaboration of Rubens' human bodies. Applying a methodological process from the image to the text and not vice versa helps to avoid looking for groundless visual correspondences for every text Rubens came across. A textual consideration of the sources, which the image suggests, can disclose new contexts to the paintings.

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misleading, since “ψυχή” or “anima” is better translated as “soul”; yet the term, probably one of the most difficult to translate, since antiquity had indeed been related to the mind and mental abilities.

For a recent discussion of Lipsius' *De bibliothecis syntagma*, see Walker, 1999: 233-47.

<sup>170</sup> Damm, Thimann and Zittel, 2013: 28.

This chapter has so far introduced Rubens' human bodies as presenting an alternative to Cardano's concept of the painter as a "skilled dissector". They were highly likely not created by the hand of a painter who anatomised real human bodies of blood and bones, but who worked on painterly bodies with the knife and brushes of the artist. The painter's purpose was not to cut up the body into parts, but to construct it the other way round: by assembling it, as Alberti advised, little by little, from the bones to the flesh, with his brush, hands, mind and *ingegno*, and further moulding it with the very fabric of the early modern mentalité. However, the proximity of painterly and medical processes and materials may explain the meshing of painting and medicine as discussed below.

#### Anatomising materiality

...come chirurgo benefico medicava l'infermo, se faceva bisogno spolpargli qualche gonfiezza, o soprabondanza di carne, radrizzandogli un braccio, se nella forma l'ossatura non fosse così aggiustata, se un piede nella positura avesse presa attitudine disconcia, mettendolo a luogo senza compatir al suo dolore, e cose simili. Così, operando e riformando quelle figure, le riduceva nella più perfetta simmetria... e doppo, fatto questo, ponendo le mani ad altro, sino che quello fosse asciutto, faceva lo stesso; e di quando in quando poi copriva di carne viva quegli estratti di quinta essenza, riducendoli con molte repliche, che solo il respirare loro mancava... il condimento de gli ultimi ritocchi era andar di quando in quando unendo con sfregazzi delle dita... oltre qualche striscio di rossetto, quasi gocciola di sangue, che invigoriva alcun sentimento superficiale... nei finimenti dipingeva più con le dita che co' penelli. ...volendo imitare

l'operazione del Sommo Creatore, faceva di bisogno osservare che egli pure, nel formar questo corpo umano, lo formò di terra con le mani.

(...like a surgeon treating a patient he would remove some swelling or excess flesh, set an arm if the bone were out of joint, or adjust a foot if it were misshapen, without the slightest pity for the victim. By thus operating on and re-forming these figures, he brought them to the highest degree of perfection ... and then, while that picture was drying, he turned to another. And he gradually covered with living flesh those bare bones, going over them repeatedly until all they lacked with breath itself... For the final touches he would blend the transitions from highlights to halftones with his fingers...or with a dab of red, like a drop of blood, he would enliven some surface... In the final stages he painted more with his fingers than with the brush. ...wishing to imitate the operation of the Supreme Creator, he used to observe that he too, in forming this human body, created it out of earth with his hands.)<sup>171</sup>

In the above quotation the Italian artist Marco Boschini (1613-78) cites the Italian painter Palma Giovane (c.1548-1628), who had experienced Titian painting. The extract compares the painter to a surgeon. The way the painter enlivened the human body, reshaped, retouched and adjusted it with his brushes and his hands in order to make it perfect encourages the comparison of the painter with a “chirurgo benefico”. Struggling to transmit materiality and enliven corporeality through his materials and the work of his hands, the painter gives life to the flesh in such a degree that it only lacks respiration.

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<sup>171</sup> Boschini, 1966 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1660): 711-12; trans. Rosand, 1982: 24.

Titian (c.1490-1576), like a surgeon, cures the body, striving to make it healthy with “*perfetta symmetria*”, according to the beauty of “*Natura e dell’ arte*”. Finally, the painter is addressed as being imitative of God. The much circulated analogy, which draws on the idea of the human body being formed with materials made out of earth, gives a divine nuance to the manual activity of the artist’s profession, which is seen as similar to the medical profession, as discussed above in relation to Remmelin’s book illustrations. The comparison of the physician and artist with the “Greatest Creator” raised humble hand-work to a divine activity. The attempt to unveil the powers of nature by observation and investigation was common to both the physician and the painter. The purpose of naturalistic representation and imitation not only brings the artist closer to the physician and natural philosopher, but also evinces, as Smith has argued, a significant overlap between art and science, so that it may be considered as “technoscience”. The collaboration of artists with physicians in knowledge-making encouraged the epistemological role that images and book illustrations came to play in the early modern period.<sup>172</sup>

The association of the painter with a physician-surgeon suggests therefore a profound relationship between them. This will be traced below to the very materiality of the objects and substances used by painters and physicians. In an often-quoted letter to Peiresc, for example, Rubens comments on the problem of discolouration. For my purposes his language is of particular importance for a more detailed understanding of the problem of the canvas’s repair:

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<sup>172</sup> Smith, 2004, 2006; see also Freedberg, 2003; in relation to Rubens, see Reeves, 1997; Jaffé, 1971; Caroline Jones and Peter Galison (eds.), 1998.

Se io sapessi chel mio ritratto fosse ancora in Anversa io lo farei ritenere per aprir la cassa et vedere se sendo stato rinchiuso tanto tempo in una cassa senza veder l' aria, non sia guasto, et si come suole accadere agli colori freschi ingialdito di maniera che non parirà più quello che fu. Il remedio però, se arriverà così mal trattato, sarà di metterlo più volte al sole che sa macerare questa ridundanza del oglio che causa questa mutanza, e si per intervalli torna ad imbrunirse bisogna di novo esporlo ai raggi solari che sono l' unico antidoto contra questo morbo cardiaco.

(If I knew that my portrait were still in Antwerp, I should have it kept there in order to open the case and see if it had spoiled at all after being packed so long without any light and air, and if, as often happens to fresh colors, it had taken on a yellow tone, very different from what it was. If it arrives in such a bad state, the remedy will be to expose it several times to the sun, whose rays will dry out the surplus oil which caused this change. And if, from time to time, it begins to turn brown, you must expose it once more to the sun, the only antidote for this grave malady.)<sup>173</sup>

Rubens' language implies that he understood himself to be a physician of painting maladies. He approached discolouration from a medical standpoint in order to articulate the "diseases" of materiality. The canvas, while inanimate, is perceived as being like a human subject and receives the attributes of a living body, that of the "malady"/"morbo". The air and light or their lack – the non-naturals that also affect the human body and can be

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<sup>173</sup> Rubens, 1887-1909, V, letter DCXVI: 153-54; trans. Magurn, 1995, letter 196 (9 August 1629): 323.

responsible for a humoral imbalance – have caused the “morbo cardiaco” of the yellow tone. The canvas presents an excess of the humours owing to “surplus oil”. Rubens corrects this moisture excess by recommending exposing the canvas to the sun, “the only antidote” in this case. Like a physician who is far from his patient, Rubens communicates his diagnosis and medical prescription through his letter – diagnosis without personal observation and examination was common and writing a letter was a popular way for a doctor to contact and cure a distant patient. The change of the colour of the human skin was perceived to indicate imbalance and possible disease, and likewise the indication of the discoloured and darkened canvas is diagnosed as a “grave malady”, in need of remedy. The artist treats the physicality of the canvas as a living body and offers remedies for an extreme imbalance which can poison the body and bring death unless cured quickly. One could argue that these metaphors elevated the profession of the painter to that of the higher-ranked surgeon and to the more respected physician.

The linkage of painting and medicine can be clearly traced by looking at figure 21. A modern observer may be confused by the purpose of this object. It looks like a spatula tool for building, but with the sharp blade it may also be ideal for butchering animal meat. The image appears in a seventeenth-century manuscript on the technology of arts by the physician and Rubens’ friend, Theodore de Mayerne (MS Sloane 2052, British Library; to be discussed in detail in chapter 3). Mayerne inserts this illustration under the section “Imprimeure des toiles á Huyle” (“Base Coating canvas with oil”), and explains that this is the knife for undercoating the canvas, adding that it measures approximately 30cm: “La lame longue d’ un pied” (“The blade is a foot long”).<sup>174</sup> With this knife the pores in the

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<sup>174</sup> MS Sloane 2052: 5<sup>r</sup>; Mayerne, 2001, trans. after Fels: 148.

linen were filled with paint with fan-shaped movements, which was often visible to the naked eye.<sup>175</sup> In Rubens' portrait of Mayerne – analysed in chapter 3 – some stripes can be seen in the background that suggest the work with the knife of the imprimatur. This cool grey tone of the undercoat is also noticeable in some parts of the painting due to pinpoint pigment losses (figs 24-26).<sup>176</sup>

The painter's knife was used not only for applying the paint, but also for transferring the pigments from the stone to the palette after grinding them with oil, as well as for scraping excess paint.<sup>177</sup> Also, in the Mayerne manuscript a knife appears for mixing the colours in the palette, while in the same manuscript the Dutch painter Mytens suggests that a knife should be used to cut the oil when thickened too much.<sup>178</sup> Rubens also reports the use of a knife, while on in his trip to Valladolid in spring 1603. Here, the continuous rains and humidity caused serious problems to the paintings he brought with him, with the colours having “swollen and flaked off, so that in many places the only remedy is to scrape them off with a knife and lay them on anew.”<sup>179</sup> The painter's knife therefore was used to either apply paint or remove it. The knife which Mayerne shows fulfils both of these needs. It enables the painter to construct, like a builder, and to anatomise, like a surgeon. As can be seen in the figures 22 and 23, which depict an amputation knife, it is the sharp end of the artist's knife that is kept for scratching the paint, while the blunt part is used for building.

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<sup>175</sup> Van Hout and Balis, 2012: 47-50.

<sup>176</sup> Microscopic examination of the painting in the North Carolina Museum has shown “a very thin white ground followed by a dark brownish gray layer” (examination report, p. 1, August, 2008).

<sup>177</sup> Van Hout and Balis, 2012: 50, 58.

<sup>178</sup> MS Sloane 2052: 88<sup>v</sup>, 16<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>179</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 8 (24 May 1603): 32-33.

Besides the spatula knife of the painter, painterly materials were also extensively used for medical purposes. This clearly creates a bridge between the two fields and further enhances the interfaces between the physician and the painter. It should be particularly taken into consideration in Rubens' case, who unquestionably had a supreme understanding of the behaviour of his materials, being always willing to modify his materials and technique.<sup>180</sup> To acquire a better insight into the enmeshment of painterly and medical practices, it should be considered that iatrochemistry and pharmacology used a wide variety of raw materials as ingredients, ranging from foods, plants and spices, to metals, pigments and dyes. Similarly, minerals, natural dyestuffs and foods were also used for mixing artist's pigments, oils and varnishes. With the appropriate grinding and preparation, plants, trees, flowers, insects, animal bones and minerals could be all used in painting.

As a physician and art connoisseur, Mayerne is a good case in point to evidence the exchange of artistic and medical ingredients. Turpentine, "*Venis-Turpentine*" and amber, for instance, are much discussed in MS Sloane 2052, but they are also mentioned in Mayerne's book on gout as ingredients for medical compounds. The pill for those afflicted from gout was "beaten into a subtile powder, with a sufficient quantity of Venis-Turpentine... The Basis, or foundation of this remedy, is the Chamapytis, or Ground Pine, which may mix alone with Turpentine".<sup>181</sup> Venice turpentine was traditionally used in medicine, often as a diuretic or for salves, but also as a sort of panacea.<sup>182</sup> The popularity of turpentine and Venice turpentine in medicine is indicated by the several references to

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<sup>180</sup> For an overall study of the evolution of Rubens' techniques, see van Hout and Balis, 2012.

<sup>181</sup> Mayerne, 1676: 49-50, 52; also, Mayerne recommends "*Acid Spirit of Turpentine*" to artificially remove crystals from wine making it thus healthier (26-27).

<sup>182</sup> Cox and Dannehl, 2007: 116-18. For the use of Venice turpentine for homemade recipes for wound salves, see Leong, 2008: 163.



them in the series of the *Pharmacopoeia Londinensis* (an authorised book with technical instructions in medicine-making).<sup>183</sup>

Amber was also used, among other ingredients, for the treatment of gout: “Seeds of *Annise, Fennel, Coriander, Cinamon, Amber, Mosk . . .*”<sup>184</sup> Interestingly, in his manuscript on the arts Mayerne inserts a recipe for cooking amber from Paracelsus’ *Chirurgia*: “Amber is cooked in naphtha to a heavy boil, then let dry once more.”<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, a remarkably extensive range of spices for medicaments is noted in the treatise on gout, including cinnamon, rosemary, cloves, coriander and saffron, which nowadays look more appropriate for a cookery book.<sup>186</sup> Foods and spices were significant ingredients of medical recipes, since according to Hippocratic medicine they had medicinal properties. Hence diet enjoyed an extremely significant role in the medicine of the period. Physicians and apothecaries were the first to write cookery books. Not surprisingly, Mayerne is considered to be the author of a treatise on food recipes entitled *Archimagirus Anglo-Gallicus* (1658). That the second section is called “Being Experiments in Sugar Works” and the third section is about preserving foods might bring the cookery book closer to iatrochemistry. The landmark change of accurate measurement and exact dosages was instrumental for the influence of Paracelsian medicine on food recipes.<sup>187</sup>

The manuscript collections of the period, which often contain both medicinal and culinary recipes, indicate the long enmeshment of food, diet and medication. Modern cookbooks also emerged out of this context around the middle of the seventeenth century

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<sup>183</sup> See e.g., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1627: 182, 204.

<sup>184</sup> Mayerne, 1676: 52.

<sup>185</sup> MS Sloane 2052: 47<sup>v</sup>; Mayerne, 2001, trans. after Fels: 190.

<sup>186</sup> Mayerne, 1676: see e.g. 38-39, 48, 52, 60; Albala, 2002.

<sup>187</sup> Spiller, 2010: 56, 67.

when professionalisation was encouraged.<sup>188</sup> By then, apothecaries were selling herbs, spices, medicines and also pigments.<sup>189</sup> Besides apothecaries, in the early modern Netherlands pigments could also be bought from grocers and spice merchants (trades with no clear distinction between them). Some artists appear to have also dealt with the painting trade and the pigments business.<sup>190</sup> Rubens had one more reason to be well aware of these overlapping fields. In addition to his Antwerpian friend and Maecenas, Cornelis van der Geest (1577-1638), who was a spice merchant, Rubens' family also had something of a grocers' tradition. His paternal grandfather was an apothecary.<sup>191</sup> Bartolomeus Rubens made a fortune when Antwerp was the mercantile capital of the North and the main spice market, with Asian products being shipped there via Lisbon.<sup>192</sup>

Of fundamental significance for the development of pharmacology in the Southern Netherlands was the advancement of medical botany. The Flemish physicians and botanists Rembert Dodoens (Rembertus Dodonaeus, 1517-85), Carolus Clusius (1526-1609) and Matthias de Lobel (Lobelius, 1538-1616) explored the medical properties of herbs by drawing on the esteemed ancient Greek book *De Materia medica* by Dioscorides (40-90 AD), as well as on the extremely popular work by the German physician and botanist Leonhart Fuchs (1501-66).<sup>193</sup> The role of the Plantin publication house in the dissemination of these beautifully illustrated herbals so popular in Rubens' circle (as shown above) must have been significant. Since 1548, the Plantin house had been based in

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.; Leong and Pennell, 2007: 135.

<sup>189</sup> Oppenheimer, 1999: 54-55; Cook, 2007: 31; see further Backer, 1990.

<sup>190</sup> Kirby, 1999: 34-35.

<sup>191</sup> Belkin, 1998: 11.

<sup>192</sup> Cook, 2007: 12-13.

<sup>193</sup> Pharmacology in the Northern Netherlands developed greatly, especially after the fall of Antwerp in 1585 and the vast emigration of its residents to the North. For a history of pharmacology in the Netherlands, see Bosman-Jelgersma, 1979.

Antwerp and had also functioned as an “international house” and a social meeting place for intellectual exchange.<sup>194</sup>

In Dodoens’ landmark *Cruyde Boek*, some of the ingredients of the painting recipes of the Mayerne manuscript can be found to have medicinal properties.<sup>195</sup> These are, for example: “bladder green”, made from the juice of buckthorn berries (*Rhamnus cathartica*); from which Dutch yellow or *schijtgeel* was also made; the yellow of Avignon made from unripened buckthorn berries; luminous red from the juice of black-berries; and blue from the juice of blueberries (*Vaccinium mytillus*).<sup>196</sup> Furthermore, a yellow paint for glazing and illumination was produced from the white rose, translucent green was made from curcuma (also used for the hyacinth paint of doublets), and of course there were the ubiquitous turpentine, Venice turpentine, and general oils and resins.<sup>197</sup> A widely circulated recipe was that for yellow paint derived from the nutmeg rose (*Rosa muscatta*), which was considered good not only for illumination and glazing, but also for colouring foods, such as meat and dough.<sup>198</sup>

Like herbs, spices were also traditionally believed to have medicinal properties in addition to their culinary use. Pepper, cinnamon, saffron, cardamom, rue, savory, melissa or lemon balm, and “grains of paradise” (perfumed black pepper) were extensively used throughout the early modern world as medicines or food condiments.<sup>199</sup> Saffron, turmeric, parsley, indigo and even flower petals were traditionally used as food colouring agents for

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<sup>194</sup> Eisenstein, 2005 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.): esp. 49, 112, 206.

<sup>195</sup> Dodoens, 1554.

<sup>196</sup> For these products in Mayerne’s manuscript, see MS Sloane 2052: 22<sup>f</sup>, 23<sup>f</sup>, 23<sup>v</sup>, 31<sup>v</sup>, 32<sup>v</sup>, 79<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.: 23; after Gerard’s *Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes*, who largely translated into English Dodoen’s herbal.

<sup>199</sup> For the medical properties of the spices, see Albala, 2003: 42-49.

both aesthetic and medicinal purposes. It is significant that the *Cockboek* (1593) of Carolus Battus (or Karel Baten, born in Ghent, but a resident of Dordrecht after the fall of Antwerp in 1585) includes instructions on how to make a red dye colour (turnsole).<sup>200</sup> In Mayerne's manuscript, foods and spices – besides, of course, the oils – are often part of his recipes, and include vinegar, honey, salt, saffron and lemon. More unusual foodstuffs are used for painting: mustard for cleaning oil paintings; juice leek blossoms; cornflowers for blue; garlic for making oil for applying gold, for which Mayerne notes “Bon. usus sum.” (“Good. have used it.”); and garlic or onion juice for the undercoating to cause colours to stick and bind to this base layer.<sup>201</sup> Similarly, among the various ingredients of Mayerne's medicines are herbs and spices, berries and mustard, wine and oxymel (a mixture of honey, water, vinegar and spices), to which he often adds more foodstuffs, such as sugar, almonds, chicken or barley broth, barley water and whey. Interestingly, in MS Sloane 2052 medical recipes are interspersed in the same folio with art recipes and there is also a recipe for colouring wine.<sup>202</sup>

This is also the case for Antony van Dyck's *Antwerp Sketchbook*, considered to largely copy Rubens' notebook.<sup>203</sup> Among recipes for oils and colours, there are medical recipes which appear in his notes in the same section and page as advice on painting techniques.<sup>204</sup> These relate to such conditions as wounds, gallstones, swollen eyes,

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<sup>200</sup> Battus, 1593: fol. 25; ‘Kookhistorie.nl’, <http://www.kookhistorie.nl/index.htm> (accessed 4 June 2014): “Om tornisol te maken: Neemt out lywaet ende neemt sop van moerbeyen ende steket lywaet daerin. Latet dan in de sonne drooghen ende steket so tot dry of vier reysen in. Latet dan so elcke reyse droogen, totdat u dunct dat root genoech is. Aldus moecht ghijt maken van de roode roosen of roode collebloemen die int coren wassen ende dit hout en ooc voor tbeste alsment uut der sonnen droocht; soo houdet best zijn couleur.”

<sup>201</sup> MS Sloane 2052: 15<sup>f</sup>, 22<sup>v</sup>, 23<sup>v</sup>, 49<sup>v</sup>, 153<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.: 28<sup>v</sup>, 75-76<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>203</sup> However, it seems doubtful that these medical recipes copy Rubens, since this content does not appear in Rubens' notebook (for this notebook, see here p. 14).

<sup>204</sup> Jaffé, 1966: vol. I, 58-61, vol. II, 213-15. Chatsworth manuscript, fols 2<sup>f</sup>-7<sup>v</sup>.

diarrhoea and dental abscesses, warts and corns. As Jaffé notes, the main ingredients of these recipes are “wine, honey, oil, eggs, endive, dandelion, lentils, rose water, pomegranate skin, sarcocolla, aloes, saffron, chamomile flowers, burnt hartshorn, plantin water, whey, boxthorn, peppercorns, sage and thyme”.<sup>205</sup> The presence of these recipes in an art notebook perhaps simply indicates that the artist kept medical notes for personal use. Yet the fact that these recipes are placed among painterly recipes might have been motivated by their common ingredients.

It should be noted that minerals were also used for both painting and medicine. While not all physicians were open to the use of minerals as medicaments, iatrochemistry and Paracelsian physicians, as well as apothecaries, were clearly in favour. Mayerne, for example, in both medical and artistic recipes largely uses the *tria prima* or *tria principia* (salt, sulphur and mercury), which were considered by the Paracelsians to be present in the human body. For instance, a recipe for azure which contains mercury, sulphur and Armenian salt plus verdigris illustrates this, as well as a recipe for *Mercurius dulcis*, which according to Mayerne was the most powerful medicine, with its basic ingredient being mercury chloride (calomel).<sup>206</sup> Minerals were widely used in pigment production: iron for red, brown, green and ochre-yellow; cinnabar (the common ore of mercury) for vermilion; arsenic and sulphur for the orange realgar and yellow orpiment; lead for white lead, massicot, minium and lead-tin yellow.<sup>207</sup> Lead monoxide was popularly used as an additive to drying oil to increase dryness.<sup>208</sup> Regarding Rubens’ paintings, besides the most

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<sup>205</sup> Jaffé, 1966: vol. I, 60. Jaffé speculates that these recipes draw on printed sources, most probably Dodoens’ *Cruyde Boeck* (Leyden edition, 1618), because the last recipe states: “All these remedies are taken from a Dutch author based on Hippocrates”.

<sup>206</sup> MS Sloane 2052: 65<sup>v</sup>; Mayerne, 1676: 39.

<sup>207</sup> Van Hout and Balis, 2012: 52-55.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*: 55.

commonly used metals research has detected the chemical compound of calcium carbonate combined with a red earth for the lower ground layer of *Peace and War*. In *Samson and Delilah* there is a high concentration of copper, blue copper carbonate, manganese and malachite. This further suggests Rubens' understanding of the chemical behaviour of his materials.<sup>209</sup>

By breaking down the materiality of painterly and medical substances and tools, we can see that the association of the painter with the physician or surgeon was grounded in actual practice. Moreover, the commonalities between them explain the confidence with which physicians openly instructed on painterly skills – as did Gerolamo Cardano at the beginning of this chapter. In this way the boundaries of medicine were easily breached, and individuals moved comfortably between the artistic and the medical world. Samuel Quiccheberg (1529–67) is another case in point. He was the court physician to Duke Albert V of Bavaria, but was also in charge of his collections. Quiccheberg wrote the first museological treatise in which he categorises the ideal princely collection. He distinguishes between man-made objects/*artificialia* held at the *Kunstkammer* and *naturalia* held at the *Wunderkammer*.<sup>210</sup> The fact that the *artificialia* expand from artworks to science objects indicate further the traditional proximity of science and art, and justify the physician's role as keeper of the collection. These early collections were used as a means of acquiring access to universal knowledge. In a similar manner, knowledge of the human body enhanced the collaboration of physicians and artists in book illustrations, as mentioned above. The intellectual exchange between physicians and artists and their common fervour to reveal the divine inner truth of the human body are explored in chapter 3. It will be

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<sup>209</sup> Roy, 1999: 94; Plesters, 1983: 38-40.

<sup>210</sup> Quiccheberg, 1565; van de Velde, 2013: 3; Smith, 2012: 297-98.

clearly shown that, besides materiality and manual engagement, a thirst for knowledge of human nature and larger metaphysical questions contributed to the enmeshment of painting and medicine. This proximity of the two fields returns us to Rubens' medical, textual source material and strongly supports a consideration of its contribution to the painterly body, and further a re-evaluation of the meshing of visual images with medicinal knowledge.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PAINTER'S BODY: AGEING AND THE QUEST FOR TEMPERAMENTAL BALANCE IN RUBENS' SELF-PORTRAITS (1623, c. 1638)

Il [Rubens] avoit la taille grande; le port majestüeux, le tour du visage regulierement formé, les joües vermeilles, les cheveux châains, les yeux brillans, mais d' un feu temperé, l' air riant, doux & honneste. Son abord estoit engageant, son humeur commode, sa conversation aisée, son esprit vif & penetrant, sa maniere de parler posée, & le ton de sa voix fort agreable; & tout cela le rendoit naturellement éloquent & persüasif.

(He [Rubens] was tall, his bearing majestic, the turn of his countenance regular, his cheeks ruddy, his hair chestnut brown, his eyes brilliant with tempered fire, his air happy, gentle and polite. His manner was engaging, his mood obliging, his conversation easy, his mind lively and perceptive, his speech measured and the tone of his voice agreeable and all this made him naturally eloquent and persuasive.)<sup>211</sup>

The unquestionably flattering description of Rubens by his biographer, Roger de Piles, is a much repeated trope. The authority of de Piles' account rests on the fact that it is based on information which Rubens' nephew, Philip, related to de Piles personally.<sup>212</sup> The image of Rubens the "gentilhomme" we find in de Piles, or Rubens the "Cavaliere" and "nobili" as

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<sup>211</sup> De Piles, 1677 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.): 211-12; trans. Scott, 2005: 78.

<sup>212</sup> Ruelens, 1883: 157-62.



constructed by Gian Pietro Bellori, has also gained currency in scholarly literature.<sup>213</sup> Yet, the formulaic nature of contemporary biographies on Rubens has never been the focus of systematic research. Besides his artistic activity, Rubens as the artist *par excellence* is further supported by recent studies on his many-sided and multi-tasking personality – at a personal, professional and socio-political level, as a humanist, member of the urban patrician, diplomat and courtier, friend, husband and father.<sup>214</sup>

The image of the intellectual, virtuous and naturally gifted artist was promoted by Rubens himself, who fashioned himself as a member of the urban intellectual elite. His residence on the Wapper in Antwerp supported this very image. It was modelled after antique Roman villas with its great garden, erudite decoration and his well-stocked library. It was the perfect locus for his activities as connoisseur and for convivial occasions with intellectuals.<sup>215</sup> It has been argued that the Renaissance image of the intellectual artist was moulded according to courtesy literature.<sup>216</sup> Nevertheless, what remains unarticulated is that both art treatises and books of manners were founded on well-established broader views of the body, in which medical precepts had a strong presence. The penetration of medical beliefs into the physicality of the body in art and etiquette manuals has never been investigated.

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<sup>213</sup> Bellori, 1672. Also, in 1675 the German painter Joachim von Sandrart (1606-1688) described Rubens as “fürtreffliche Künstler” (“excellent artist”).

<sup>214</sup> The bibliography is quite vast. For Rubens as a humanist, see Muller, 1989, 2004; Morford, 1991; Huemer, 1996; Arents, 2001; Heinen, 2002; Belkin and Healy, 2004; Meganck, 2007; Thielemann, forthcoming, 2015; as a member of the urban patrician class, Büttner, 2006a; as a man of marriage and family, Goodman, 1992; Thøfner, 2004, forthcoming, 2015; Feghelm and Kersting, 2005; Belkin, 2006; as a friend, Baudouin, 1977; Bomford, 2000, 2003; Woollett, and Suchtelen, 2006.

<sup>215</sup> For Rubens’ house, see Belkin and Healy, 2004; van de Kerckhof, 2004; Heinen, 2002; McGrath, 1978; for Rubens particularly as a collector, see Muller, 1989.

<sup>216</sup> Warnke, 1993; Campbell, 2002.

The present discussion will explore the visual construction of the artist's physical body. This is the first attempt to view Rubens' body from a medical point of view. Although recent studies have addressed the medical concepts underlying the body of the artist, these topics are confined to issues of disease and old age. The healthy constitution of the intellectual artist is surprisingly neglected, whereas the diseased body of the aged artist has attracted attention in the last decade. While it is commonly accepted that old age presented a threat to the profession of the artist, there is no consensus on how artists faced old age. Erin Campbell has argued that artists turned to the examples of courtesy literature and the prototype of the old man as intellectual, in order to downplay physical decline.<sup>217</sup> Along similar lines, Sophie Bostock has suggested that Titian portrayed his old age as an advance towards spirituality.<sup>218</sup> Furthermore, Philip Sohm has explored the artist's decaying body as mirroring an ageing painting process.<sup>219</sup> He also argued that artists used their ageing body as a propaganda device, which was strategically moulded to gain sympathy and attract commissions.

I contend that it was Rubens' health and vigour which was crucial for the construction of his own ideal persona. Rubens, as will be argued, emphasised his intellectuality, but this was more than a counter-offensive against physical decline. Only briefly he mentions his bodily misfortunes in letters to intimate friends, and when that happens his language is dry, without sentimentalism.<sup>220</sup> It seems that he was too proud to confess his physical decline

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<sup>217</sup> Campbell, 2002.

<sup>218</sup> Bostock, 2007.

<sup>219</sup> Sohm, 2007.

<sup>220</sup> See e.g. the letter to his friend Philippe Chifflet, see here p. 109, fn. 309. It is indicative that in his letter to George Geldorp (2 April 1638), whilst he could use his disease as an excuse, Rubens justifies his delay by explaining that he wishes to execute the work with pleasure and that he is also working on some other pieces; Rubens, 1955, letter 243: 410.

and he continued painting until his hand was paralysed.<sup>221</sup> By focusing on two of Rubens' most popular self-portraits, this chapter sheds light on a different aspect of the artist's body: the artist as a relentless promoter of his bodily health and investigator of ways and visual means to counter-balance the temperamental changes caused by age and disease. The desire for bodily balance is registered with more intensity in the last self-portrait. This was painted in a period when Rubens' bodily infirmities were well testified.

Rubens' self-portraits have long been regarded as offering an insight into his external appearance, physical characteristics and inner character. Rubens painted only four self-portraits that depict him alone. These have been briefly explored as presenting the artist as a "perfect gentleman" moving between the world of letters and court with an emphasis on the artist's commitment to Neostoicism, as will be discussed later. Rubens' assimilation of medical principles to his drawings and paintings (as discussed in chapter 1), impels a broader medical viewpoint of his visually represented bodies. It will be argued here that basic physiological processes are fundamental to the visual construction of the artist's body in his self-portraits. Furthermore, this and the following two chapters argue that looking at portraiture from a medical viewpoint can be extremely rewarding, even when the sitter looks healthy or when there is no particular "medical" emphasis to an organ or part of the body. Besides contributing a fresh look at Rubens' self-portraits, this chapter therefore wishes to open up a new investigative avenue into larger issues of portraiture in general.

This chapter on the visual construction of the painter's body will address how the material and immaterial peculiarities of the body of the painter are expressed and enlivened

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<sup>221</sup> On 6 April 1639, it was the notary Henry Cantelbeek who signed a document instead of the artist: "As proxy for the gentleman, who, having gout in his right hand, has declared he can neither write nor sign his name"; van den Branden, 578; qt. after Baudouin, 1989: 276.

through the physicality of painting, the brushstrokes and the materials. It is worth recalling that the physicality of the early modern body was not understood as being restricted to external appearance, but as an inextricable nexus of material and immaterial properties. In this view, the tangible, physical characteristics of the body – living or painted – were regarded as externalising the “unseen”, the spiritual and immaterial. The chapter suggests that the challenge of the painter of the human body is to capture inner and abstract traits in a new form of matter. In this process, paint becomes not only the carrier of the immaterial and spiritual from the living body of the painter, but also receives spiritual properties. Paint is physicality and spirituality. The fabricated body has its own identity and subjectivity, which produces, as well as is produced by, a new context. It is enlivened through a continuous process of endogenous and exogenous interactions.

In the Windsor portrait (1623, Windsor Castle, Royal Collection, London; fig. 27), special importance will be given to the inscription with Rubens’ signature. By bringing together visibility, materiality and textuality, my approach also addresses the relationship and interactive process between the body of the artist in the work of art, the performing body of the artist as creator, and the perceiving body, which in the Windsor portrait was the future king of England, Charles I. The second case study, the Vienna portrait (c. 1638, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; fig. 28), was a more private portrait whose ideal beholders were members of Rubens’ close circle.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> The portrait was found in Rubens’ house at the time of his death; Muller, 1989.

### The painter's body in the prime of life

“Petrus Paullus Rubens / se ipsum expressit / A.D MDCXXIII / Aetatis Suae XXXXV” (“Peter Paul Rubens / depicts himself / in the year 1623 / aged 45”) is inscribed in Rubens’ hand at the top right of the Windsor self-portrait (fig. 29). The artist’s act of writing and painting here stand in a close relationship with each other. Hand as writing and hand as painting materialise the artist. The official character of the signature, which is unique among Rubens’ rarely signed artworks, shows the importance of the commissioner.<sup>223</sup> It further denotes the artist’s desire to express authorship. Rubens refers to this portrait two years later in a letter to Valavez:

The Prince of Wales...is the greatest amateur of paintings among the princes of the world. He already has something by my hand, and, through the English agent resident in Brussels, has asked me for my portrait with such insistence that I found it impossible to refuse him. Though to me it did not seem fitting to send my portrait to a prince of such rank, he overcame my modesty.<sup>224</sup>

There is further evidence that Rubens was asked for his own portrait. In a letter (18 December 1622) to William Trumbull, the English minister in Brussels, Sir Henry Danvers writes from London that the Prince desires to acquire Rubens’ portrait for his gallery of famous men. Danvers asks Trumbull to make sure that the portrait is “originall and every

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<sup>223</sup> White, 2007: 204.

<sup>224</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 60 (10 January 1625): 101-102.

part of it wrought by his owne hand”.<sup>225</sup> Trumbull asserts in a letter (1 March 1623) to Sir Dudley Carleton that he was asked by Danvers for Rubens’ “owne Pourtrait, to be placed in the Princes Gallery”.<sup>226</sup> Undoubtedly, this is the portrait that was recorded in the inventory of Charles I (1649) as given by Danvers to the King.<sup>227</sup> It is not clear whether Charles asked Rubens for his portrait “with such insistence”, but Rubens grasped the opportunity to promote himself as being pursued by a Prince. Indeed, this portrait became the widely disseminated image of Rubens.<sup>228</sup> As the 1623 date shows, it was painted immediately after the negotiations with Trumbull. It has been suggested that this piece was a substitute for a former studio work, which Rubens supplied to Danvers not knowing that it was for Charles I. This work was sent back as “a peece scarce touched by his [Rubens’s] hand”.<sup>229</sup>

Therefore, the emphasis on Rubens’ own hand explains the gravity of his signature and his desire to seal the work as done “by his owne hand”, inscribed as “se ipsum expressit”.<sup>230</sup> Furthermore, the visual incorporation of the text into the panel aims to validate the authenticity of his image as an objectified self. The image as an “alter ego” or a surrogate for the artist, as the anthropologist Alfred Gell has argued, becomes a means of

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<sup>225</sup> Discovered by Howarth 1990, Berkshire County Record Office; “being very desirous that the Prince his gallerie should contayne some excellent peece of his to paragon those workes that are there of many famous men I must with all manner of earnestness crave yo<sup>ur</sup> uttermoste endeavo<sup>r</sup> and his favo<sup>r</sup> for his owne picture made originall and every part of it wrought with his owne hand; for the price I will not lymitte w<sup>ch</sup> shalbe readily payed to any merchant heere by his owne assignment. Lastly lett mee intreate you to take care for the sending over of this much requested picture w<sup>ch</sup> I heare hee hath made already...” Qt after White, 2007: 204.

<sup>226</sup> Rubens, 1887-1909, III: 134.

<sup>227</sup> Van der Doort, 1757: 126.

<sup>228</sup> A copy of this portrait on canvas stayed in Rubens’ possession until 1628. In 1630 it was in France, in the collection of the artist’s friend and humanist Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637); today it is in the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Sydney. Paulus Pontius produced an engraving after the image and after his own design and not Rubens, which disseminated the popular iconography of the artist. In the engraving, the features of the face are harder and the golden chain is emphasised; see further Vlieghe, 1987, no 135. For the popularity of the portrait and numerous copies, see White, 2007: 205-206.

<sup>229</sup> Vlieghe, 1987, II: 156. It has been also suggested that the execution of the portrait had started before the commission by Lord Danvers, though for what purposes is unclear. White, 2007: 205.

<sup>230</sup> White, 2007: 200.

introducing himself to Charles I.<sup>231</sup> It is therefore of great interest to trace not only how Rubens presented himself, but how he also wished the extremely powerful political personae of the age and the elite circles of England to perceive him.

The artist depicts himself in a bust-length three-quarter view, looking at the viewer. The body is turned to the left while the head is turned to the right in a slight movement, which gives depth to the image. His sober apparel is more appropriate for a gentleman than for a painter. While details cannot be easily discerned, the high quality of the velvet fabric of the black cloak appears more clearly at the artist's shoulder. His elegant, black broad-brimmed hat with a golden cord further gives him a courteous appearance. The golden chain which is glimpsed at his neck, with tact indicates his socio-political advancement.<sup>232</sup> However, this rich outfit dispenses with fanciness and unostentatiously encapsulates the profile of an intellectual patrician of the age.<sup>233</sup> His white, lace collar illuminates his face, which is already dramatically highlighted by the dark cloak, hat and background as the focal point of the panel. The turbulent background has been seen by Elizabeth McGrath as a rocky formation and a symbol of constancy.<sup>234</sup> Justus Müller Hofstede has suggested that the portrait is inspired by Neostoicism.<sup>235</sup> The evening sky may be an allegory of the transitoriness of time. "A rock and a reddening sky" in the background in Latin would be

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<sup>231</sup> Qt. after Woodall, 2005: 12.

<sup>232</sup> This chain may be a general symbol of honour. It may also allude to the chain Rubens received in 1609 from the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, or to the one received by 1623 from Christian IV of Denmark; White, 2007: 204.

<sup>233</sup> The symposium "(Un)Dressing Rubens: Fashion and Painting in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp", 2014, Antwerp, organised by the Rubenianum and the KU Leuven Art History Department, recently provided interesting, novel remarks on the importance of dress and costumes for Rubens and for understanding Rubens' bodies. Rubens preferred depicting himself in sober, dark outfits. The exception is his fancy wedding outfit in *The Honeysuckle Bower* (1609, Alte Pinakothek, Munich).

<sup>234</sup> McGrath, 1989: 566.

<sup>235</sup> Müller Hofstede, 1992a, 1992b.

*Petrus et caelum rubens*.<sup>236</sup> In short, the portrait depicts a blushing Rubens; a clever pun. The portrait thus has been seen as presenting Rubens as a humanist and intellectual as well as a successful patrician; a *pictor doctus* and not a man who is merely defined by the profession of painting.

This image of a handsome, pleasing, intellectual and thriving man, I wish to suggest here, might have been further promoted by the rendering of his age, which is underlined by the inscription, “Aetatis Suae XXXXV”. It is the only self-portrait by Rubens which reveals his age in this way. This extra element of identity corresponds to the visualisation of the middle-aged man and subtly leads the viewer to create bridges between age conventions and his bodily constitution. Theories on age could provide, as will be shown, a wide gamut of visual choices for artists.

Ageing in the early modern period was understood as a process which differentiated the body from a previous state and was caused by a physiological fluctuation of the bodily humours. In the *Physiologia*, characterised as “the apotheosis of Renaissance Galenism”, the French physician Jean Fernel (1497-1558), one of the leading medical writers of the period (and whose name was listed in the catalogue of Albert Rubens’ library, as noted earlier in chapter 1), defines age: “Vt sit aetas id vitae curriculum quo luculenter corporis constitutio per se suóque nutu mutatur” (“So an age is a stage in life at which the bodily constitution alters of its own accord”).<sup>237</sup> This humoral fluctuation, Fernel highlights, is the reason for ageing and not some external cause. He then explains ageing as an ongoing process which moves from a hotter and moister constitution to colder and drier, which

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Fernel, 2003 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1567): 5, 246; trans. Forrester: 247.



normally happens to everyone – unless some other change takes place and affects the constitution of the individual.<sup>238</sup> Since everyone is born with a different constitution, the internal or external effects of ageing largely differ from person to person, but can be altered by a rigorous health regimen. The individual is thus not a passive viewer of the intransigence of ageing, but can intercede and work towards bodily balance by modifying his or her daily habits.

The ideal stage of life was traditionally seen as middle age, when it is more likely for humours to achieve a perfect balance or, at least, come closer to *eukrasia*. While all writers agree that this stage is somewhere in the middle of a man's life, not all commit themselves to precise years or agree on the number of life stages.<sup>239</sup> Fernel counts five stages and locates the best age in the middle of the extremes – “in medio extremorum situm” – which he estimates is between thirty-five or forty and fifty years; the mature and steady age and the most temperate and modest of all ages.<sup>240</sup> Fernel's view of *media aetas* largely adheres to the early modern medical notion of age, which would perceive Rubens at the age of forty-five as at the best age of *maturitas*.

According to Galenic physiology the internal constitution of the body, as has been already noted, was supposed to be reflected in external characteristics, appearance, character, behaviour and manners. Not only the constitution of the middle-aged man was *temperata*, but his character could also attain modesty and temperance. This goes back to

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.: 246-51.

<sup>239</sup> Three, four, seven, or even eleven cycles of ages of man are addressed in ancient and early modern treatises. See further Burrow, 1988: esp. ch. 1.

<sup>240</sup> Fernel, 2003: 248-51; “Succedit constans et matura sui vbique ferè similis, temperata vix annum attingens quinquagesimum.” (248); “The next is steady and mature, changing little anywhere as a rule, moderate and hardly reaching the fiftieth year.” (249) At verò absolutè atque simpliciter non singulis hic aetatibus, sed ea duntaxat quae matura constansque est, temperatus erit, parem sortitus extremorum portionem. (250) “But in fact one will not be temperate, in the pure and unqualified sense of the word, at the individual ages, but just at the age of steady maturity, picking up an equal part of the limits.” (251)

the extremely influential theory of Aristotle on the three stages of age. After addressing the extremes of youth and old age, Aristotle extols middle age as the *ἀκμή* or prime of life, when there is the right amount of confidence, good judgment, balance between nobility and usefulness, temperance and braveness, and “all the valuable qualities that youth and age divide between them are united in the prime of life, while all their excesses or defects are replaced by moderation and fitness”.<sup>241</sup> It is in this stage that body and character might attain perfection, even though Aristotle locates the *acme* of the body between thirty and thirty-five, with the mind reaching its peak around forty-nine.<sup>242</sup>

Aristotle’s theory on the stages of life was frequently discussed in Rubens’ time, not only in medical treatises. In the landmark *Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione addresses age along similar lines to Aristotle by discussing the virtues and vices of the extremes – young and old – whilst arguing that “of all possible ages, the age of manhood is the most composed, since it has shed the unpleasant attributes of youth and not yet attained those of old age.”<sup>243</sup> In the arts, representing age has always been seen as of crucial importance to the constitution of a subject’s character. Horace’s popular advice in his *Ars Poetica*, “to note the behaviour of every age-group, / Give grace to the variation in character and years”, was widely cited in early modern art treatises.<sup>244</sup> The Flemish-born Dutch painter and biographer Karel van Mander (1548-1606), for instance, stressed that skin variations depend on the age, gender and profession of the represented body.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, II, 14, trans. Rhys Roberts; <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.2.ii.html>.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> Castiglione, 1967: 122-24.

<sup>244</sup> Horace, trans. Kline, 2005: 156-57.

<sup>245</sup> Van Mander, *Den grondt*, ch. 12 (“Van wel schilderen, oft Coloren” / “Of painting well or colouring”).

Rubens represents himself as being in the *media aetas*, the prime of his health, and at the age of steadiness, constancy and temperance, when the body is closest to *eukrasia*, the perfect humoral balance, and, according to Aristotle, is reaching mental perfection.<sup>246</sup> In order to explore how Rubens' outer appearance gives insight into his inner virtues and mental capacities, it is extremely important to understand the often-overlooked belief that mental vivacity was thought to be mirrored by outer appearance. This is clearly indicated in the book by Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius (1505-68) *De Miraculis occultis Naturae* (1559, Antwerp; referred to in chapter 1 as listed in the inventory catalogue):

For where there is an error about some principle part, there the mind partakes of some inconvenience, and cannot perfectly perform her offices. So they that are deformed with a bunch-back, so it be a natural Infirmity, and not accidental, nor come by any fall or blow, are commonly wicked and malicious; because the depravation is communicated to the heart. [On the other hand,] those that are of a pleasing and mild spirit, all things appear well in their countenances. Their standing, going, lying down, their countenance, eyes, hands, motion, serve all to expresse an honest and comely mind; as also in the face, wisdom, honour, honesty and other vertues appear.<sup>247</sup>

The necessity for outer beauty to respond to the inner qualities is also a subject often addressed by books of manners. Indicative is Nicolas Faret who in his *L'honneste-homme*

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<sup>246</sup> My approach to the medical effects of ageing on the painter's body supports the interpretation of constancy and Neostocism as argued by McGrath, 1989, and Müller Hofstede, 1992a, 1992b, although clearly from a different point of view.

<sup>247</sup> Lemnius, 1658 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1559): 131.

underlines that the physical beauty of a well-formed and strong body is a prerequisite for nobility, along with the inner virtues and the advantages of birth.<sup>248</sup>

The belief that the mind and body interact and affect each other receives the status of a rule and is discussed in an astonishing variety of material. Mercuriale in his book on medical gymnastics (with which Rubens was familiar as mentioned in chapter 1), explains the importance of gymnastics for a healthy body and mind:

gymnastics, although it may appear to concern itself solely with the body, also treats body and mind together, as Plato recommended in his *Timaeus*, so that it does not allow the body to rampage insolently in its toughness and strength, but subjects it to the domination, control and direction of the rational activities of the mind.<sup>249</sup>

Along similar lines, the engraver and publisher Crispijn de Passe (c.1564-1637), who was from Zeeland but trained in Antwerp, instructs students on the necessity of bodily health for mental activities.<sup>250</sup> In an extract on “Small-ball exercise”, he explicitly articulates the interaction of body and mind:

Multiplici intentione animorum, corpus saepe torpore afficitur: unde non inutilis studiosæ iuventuti, quo bonum corporis habitum et valetudinem conservare posit,

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<sup>248</sup> Faret, 1630: 25.

<sup>249</sup> Mercuriale, 2008: 323 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1573, bk3: ch. I, 37-42).

<sup>250</sup> For de Passe as a collaborator with Marten de Vos, see Veldman, 2001: 19-31.

parvae pilae ludus, tantopere veteribus, ac maxime Galeno, medicorum post Hippocratem principi, commendatus; ut singularem de eo libellum posteris relinqueret. Nam animum languescere corpore male habito necesse est; quo scilicet tamquam instrumento, ad contemplationis praxim perpetuo utitur.

(When minds are concentrating on many different things the body is often afflicted by sluggishness. Hence the game of small-ball is not without usefulness for studious young people as a means whereby they may preserve good posture and health of body. This game is so highly commended by the ancients, and most of all by Galen, the greatest of physicians after Hippocrates, that he left to posterity a small monograph on this subject. For it is inevitable that if the body is badly treated the mind becomes languid – the mind, which, you should understand, is constantly being used as a sort of instrument for the practice of contemplation.)<sup>251</sup>

Mercuriale also refers to that booklet by Galen and to the advantages of ball games to “induce courage in mind, and by strengthening every part of the body in an appropriate way, produce good health in the body and harmony in the limbs.”<sup>252</sup>

For artists, the nexus of body and mind was of fundamental importance for the depiction of the human body. The philologist Franciscus Junius (1591-1677), in his treatise on *The Painting of the Ancients* – a copy of which Junius sent to Rubens – advises the painter to observe very well “how severall passions and affections of the minde doe alter

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<sup>251</sup> De Passe, 1612: 13<sup>f</sup>; trans. by Dr Janet Fairweather. Many thanks to Dr. Cordula van Wyhe for turning my attention to this extract.

<sup>252</sup> Mercuriale, 2008: 549 (1573: bk5, ch. 4, 33-35).

the countenance of man. *Every commotion of the minde, sayth Tullie, hath a certaine countenance of his owne by nature.*<sup>253</sup> In Rubens' portrait, mental vibrancy is captured in the illuminated face and the shining forehead which contrasts with the darkness of the rest of the body and the background (fig. 30). While this emphasis on the head as relating to mental abilities will be analysed later, I would like here to draw attention to the depicted skin as materialising the well-being of the artist's body and mind. The sound condition of the painting works to the advantage of the present discussion. The face, in relation to other parts of the panel, has been painted to a higher degree of finish, with much attention to detail and the final paint layers.<sup>254</sup> The colouring of the skin marks the healthy and vibrant constitution of the body, with the reddish nuances at the cheeks, lips, nose and eyes reflecting the warmth of the blood's circulation. As researches show, Rubens' colour gamut for the skin and flesh tints comprised lead white, ochre pigments, red lake, vermilion, lead-tin yellow, and a little charcoal black or a blue pigment.<sup>255</sup> As Lehmann argues by focusing on the Netherlandish "life colour" of the period, the basic ingredients for painting the colour of flesh were red, ochre, and lead white, with the flesh colour to be the only one which required so many different pigments and build-up layers.<sup>256</sup>

A closer look at Rubens' face shows the numerous variations in the flesh colour, which naturally give the sense of warmth suggesting a hot, yet not fierce, temperamental constitution. Aligned with basic physiological notions of skin colouring, Junius emphasises that "the true and naturall colour of well-complexioned bodies doe shew it selfe every where in his [the *Artificer's*] picture, seeing without it there cannot be any beautie", and he

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<sup>253</sup> Junius, 1638 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1637): bk. III, ch. I, 235-36.

<sup>254</sup> White, 2007: 201.

<sup>255</sup> Van Hout and Balis, 2012: 72-73; van Hout, 2001.

<sup>256</sup> Lehmann, 2007-2008: 93; Turner, 2005: 63-80; Lehmann, 2007: 21-40.

advises painters that human bodies look “comelier” when they “are graced with the true and lively colour of pure and wholesome blood”.<sup>257</sup> Regarding the male body, Junius by quoting Quintilian, states that “*the body must not be too white: but somewhat overspread with blood*” and emphasises that good flesh colour indicates the dignity of the man.<sup>258</sup> Likewise, these rosy and red touches on Rubens’ epidermis must be seen as integrating the dignity of the painter, and as giving access to the immaterial properties of a modest, temperate and pleasing character. The “*soules modestie*” is also indicated, according to Junius, by a blush.<sup>259</sup> Rubens’ blushing in front of the royal family relates modesty and humility. The variation of the skin colour tints was also determined by the age of the person depicted, as the Flemish artist and theoretician Domenicus Lampsonius (1532-99) highlights in his art treatise:

The younger and more beautiful a person is, the more difficult it is to paint his/her skin colour. If one paints it too uniformly, it will appear like painted wood or stone. Responsible for the different skin colours is the blood beneath the skin, which causes the skin to appear rosy or deathly pale.<sup>260</sup>

In addition to the importance of depicting blood circulation, a healthy constitution required consideration of the appropriate quantity of moisture. In Rubens’ portrait, the use

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<sup>257</sup> Junius, 1638: bk. III, ch. III, 283-84.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.: bk. III, ch. II, 260, ch. III 283-84; For Rubens’ letter to Junius, in which the artist praises the book and encourages Junius to expand his work to the Italian Renaissance masters, see Rubens, 1955, letter 241 to Junius (1 August 1637): 406- 408.

<sup>259</sup> Junius, 1638: bk. III, ch. IV, 292.

<sup>260</sup> Lampsonius, 1565; qt. after Lehmann, 2007-2008: 97.

of lead white and vermilion makes the skin look in some parts opalescent and moisturised, such as on his nose and under his right eye. Moisture, which is further accentuated by the oil medium, clearly supports an image of a man in the prime of life, still far from an aged, dry and cold constitution. The several oily layers of skin and the variation in translucency and thickness of the materials create the illusion of three-dimensionality, which enlivens the biological processes of an otherwise materialised human body. The skin becomes, as has been succinctly noted in relation to Rubens' painting, "part of the flesh beneath it" and not a "border".<sup>261</sup> The subtlety of the skin suggests it as more a communicative organ between the inside and the outside. This can be explained by the medical perception of the skin, from antiquity until the discovery of the microscope, which was conceptualised as a double membrane: the epidermis (the external layer), and the dermis, which was thought to be "full of pores and holes", or "perforated by frequent narrow vents to give passage to exhalation from the inside".<sup>262</sup> Through "frequent narrow vents" – the pores of the skin – the inner body communicates with the environment and exchanges fluids and spirits in the form of fumes or sweat. While excrements and refuse are exhaled and good spirits are inhaled, the opposite also happens – which is why the quality of the ambient air was seen as extremely important for a healthy balance.<sup>263</sup>

Practical instructions on the visual representation of such physical details are not to be found in art treatises of the period. These adopt a theoretical approach that emphasises the intellectual image of the artist. Nevertheless, Lampsonius turns the attention of the painter to the porous nature of skin:

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<sup>261</sup> De Clippel, 2008: 125; Fend, 2001.

<sup>262</sup> Lemnius, 1658 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1559): 343; Fernel, 2003: 149.

<sup>263</sup> Fernel, 2003: 144-51, 290-91, qt. 149.



The exact representation of flesh colours is only possible if one uses pigments with a certain degree of graininess that corresponds to the pores of the body depicted (except for the ones where the pores are not visible) and with this the paintings will acquire such realism that one believes not to look at painted objects but at nature itself.<sup>264</sup>

This effect of a porous, spongy skin becomes more visible in some parts of the portrait, such as the nose, his right cheek and forehead, where the illusion of pores is enhanced. Nonetheless, it cannot be assured that skin pores were created intentionally by the artist. The ageing of the materials of the panel, both endogenous and exogenous processes, might be responsible for the small round voids which give the illusion of a porous skin. They may have been caused by burst bubbles in the paint or by scratching off excess paint with the knife. Yet the several painted skin layers of his face enliven the surface and approximate to the skin layers of the human body – epidermis, dermis and several membranes. Alberti's advice to paint the body by starting from the very inner anatomical structure and dressing it little by little is visualised here.<sup>265</sup> The physicality of the oil medium – the building up of several layers and the option of intervening and making changes without time limitations – significantly encouraged the sense of life in the painted oily layers of flesh and skin.

The variations in the smoothness and colouring of the skin and the gradation of the impasto volumes convey the illusion of effortless brushstrokes. An early modern viewer

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<sup>264</sup> Lampsonius, 1565, qt. after Lehmann, 2007-2008: 97.

<sup>265</sup> For Alberti's advice, see here ch. 1: 52.

might have interpreted these as indicating the painter's unaffected personality. The Renaissance motto that "every painter paints himself" had motivated an iconographic or stylistic analysis of the artwork as somehow embodying the artist, his appearance, character, behaviour and lifestyle – what Philip Sohm calls "corporeal autopsy".<sup>266</sup> Self-portraiture forces even more explicit links between the imaged and the real body of the artist. Rubens was surely familiar with these kinds of ideas when he portrayed his steady body in front of a dramatic, turbulent background, choosing warm colours for his face. He thus dispensed with the melancholic image of artistic genius.<sup>267</sup> That the fabrication of the artist as a melancholic genius was viewed critically is indicated by Giovanni Batista Armenini (1530-1609). The Italian art theorist and painter complained that "malinconica biz(z)arria" ("melancholy eccentricity"), is fashioned by many "sciocchi" ("fools"), and he praised instead the excellent master who is made distinctive by the "eccellenza dell' arte...un prudente giudizio per molte scienze e di rarrissime qualità abondevole" ("excellence of his art...prudent wisdom, the knowledge of many sciences, and the rarest qualities").<sup>268</sup> Armenini concludes thus that "più alti ingegni...non sia accompagnato da un umor capriccioso e fantastic per molte biz(z)arie di cervello" ("the loftiest minds...[are not] accompanied by a capricious and fantastic humor owing to many oddities of the mind").<sup>269</sup> Furthermore, the melancholic temperament was not seen as appropriate for

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<sup>266</sup> Sohm, 2007: 5, 40-46; Weststeijn, 2008: 145-46, 179-180.

<sup>267</sup> This image of the artist as melancholic "genius" was boosted in the Renaissance, esp. by Ficino, 1489; see further Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, 1964: esp. 241-373; Wittkower and Wittkower, 1963; Radden (ed.), 2002; Brann, 2001.

<sup>268</sup> Armenini, 1988 (ed. Gorreri, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1586): ch. XV, 233-34; trans. 1977, Olszewski, 274-75.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

diplomats and those who counselled important political persons – in other words, someone like Rubens.<sup>270</sup>

Rubens' sanguine palette alludes thus to a pleasing, warm-hearted, sociable, easygoing and lively person, whilst the melancholic tones of his sober clothing erase any sense of impulsiveness or over-confidence and suggest instead a balanced temperament and character. This equilibrium is also reinforced by the position of his face: half of it is lighted, closer to the viewer and fully exposed, and half shadowed and more distant. Whilst his right eye with a slightly lifted eyebrow gazes at the viewer with confidence, his shadowed left eye gives the impression of a more distant man. Hence, Rubens advertises himself as modest as well as passionate, keeping to the golden mean in everything. These traits are further denoted by the energy of his moustache, which twirls up, and by the richness of his facial hair – a sign of maturity and masculinity explained as an excrement of excessive innate heat and the power to procreate (as will be discussed further in the next chapter).

Accordingly, Rubens' painterly style is of exceptional vibrancy. It is a style which gives the impression of naturalness and nonchalance as illustrated by the hairs of the artist's moustache, beard and head. These visualise Bellori's impression: "He colored from nature and was intense in his mixtures... He maintained such unity and resoluteness that his figures seem executed in one dash of the brush and infused with one breath".<sup>271</sup> However, this great variety of brown and white tones and the silky texture of his beard

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<sup>270</sup> See e.g. ch. 4: 189, fn. 538.

<sup>271</sup> Bellori, 2005: 205.

indicate attention to detail and suggest instead the meticulous “*sprezzatura*” of his brush.<sup>272</sup> The physicality of the brush, the handling of the materials and the elaboration of iconographic choices embody the personal and artistic vivaciousness of a *temperate* constitution. In this way the artist is introduced to the Prince of Wales: as a very promising man in the prime of life.

By using materiality as a means to shed light on his external and internal qualities, Rubens did not simply portray himself – *imago, depingo, delineo* – but he *expressed* himself. Or, as he wrote on the portrait panel: “*se ipsum expressit*”. The phrase recalls the famous passage from the epistle of the Renaissance Italian scholar and poet Angelo Poliziano (1454-94), sent to the humanist Paolo Cortesi. By criticising Cortesi’s collection of letters as merely copying the Ciceronian style, Poliziano argues that it is through an eclectic approach that a personal style is attained: “*Non exprimis, inquit aliquis, Ciceronem. Quid tum? non enim sum Cicero; me tamen, ut opinor, exprimo*” (“You do not express, someone will object, Cicero. So what? I am not Cicero; but (it seems to me) I express myself”).<sup>273</sup> Poliziano’s proud manifestation of “*me exprimo*” and plea for individual self-expression sheds light on Rubens’ inscription and accentuates the portrait as an embodiment of personal artistic style and identity. This is further emphasised by the word “*ipsum*”. The “*exprimo*” reveals that this is not an exact likeness of the painter captured in a spontaneous moment, but a representative image of his physicality, personality, professional identity and aspirations. Taking heed of medical notions and biological processes as suggested here, can give us access to the material and immaterial

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<sup>272</sup> For the use of Castiglione’s concepts of *sprezzatura* and *grazia* by art theorists, see Burke, 1995: 53-54, 153.

<sup>273</sup> For the entire letter, see Garin, 1952: 902-904, qt. 902; for trans. and discussion, see Godman, 1998: qt. 46.

qualities of the depicted Rubens. Particular emphasis was given to the skin as not only showing a healthy constitution but also externalising Rubens' dignity and virtues. However, it is the paint and oils that construct this process, enliven the body and are enlivened by the body; the one takes life from the other. Before discussing how immateriality is further mapped onto Rubens' body and the insights this can give us into the painting process, it would be helpful to first look at how ageing affected the visual representation of the painter's physicality.

The ageing body of the artist: "nisi ut, cum hoc resciero doctior moriar"

In his last self-portrait Rubens is depicted in a very similar fashion to the 1623 portrait, but he gives himself a quite different physical appearance (fig. 28). He is dressed similarly to the Windsor portrait, and indeed to all four of his self-portraits, in black apparel and wearing a hat (figs 31-32; without the hat in the 1615 portrait, Uffizi).<sup>274</sup> The white collar has become richer and leads our gaze to the face. The courteous style here is even more emphasised by the enlargement of the canvas to three-quarter length exposing more of the bodily posture and revealing Rubens' hands.

The emphasis on gracious attire and the lower viewpoint in this painting suggest Rubens' self-assurance and present him, as Müller Hofstede has argued, as a "vornehmer Grandseigneur", a "distinguished nobleman", who had achieved international recognition

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<sup>274</sup> For some introductory information, see Vlieghe, 1987, II. For the late portrait no. 137: 159-60; and for possible preparatory drawings for this portrait no. 137a-137b: 160-62; for the other two self-portraits no. 134: 151-53, and no 136: 157-59.

and distinction as a painter, diplomat and humanist.<sup>275</sup> Rubens had been knighted by Philip IV in 1631 and by Charles I of England in the previous year. In 1635 he bought the estate in Steen elevating him to “Lord of Steen”. The column on the left is a Neostoical symbol of constancy.<sup>276</sup> Christopher White has also characterised the portrait as “an imposing statement of his position as knight and gentleman to be handed down to posterity...[an] aristocratic pose which would have served for a state portrait at any of the European courts of the time”.<sup>277</sup>

Rubens’ aristocratic air is also underscored by his beard, fashioned according to the elite styles of the period, while, bearing in mind his early baldness, his rich locks of hair may point to the presence of a hair-piece, as Vlieghe has suggested.<sup>278</sup> This image of a high-ranking man is further supported by the rapier and the gloves, which can be seen as “externalising” his inner virtue, or, as “gentling” his hand.<sup>279</sup> As motifs of military power, symbols of chivalric significance and elevated social position, the rapier and gloves are appropriate for noble men, active in the socio-political stage.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Müller Hofstede, 1992b: 109.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> White, 1987: 291. Lisa Rosenthal (2005: 207) regards the portrait as meeting “the conventions of aristocratic portraiture, such as the three-quarter length format, the low viewpoint, the flanking column, and monumental pose, in order to present himself in a manner generally accorded to military leaders and heads of state.”

<sup>278</sup> See e.g. Anthony van Dyck’s portrait of Charles I, 1635-36, in the Royal Collection, London; or even his self-portraits in a beard which came to be called the “Van Dyke beard”. Vlieghe, 1987, II: 160.

<sup>279</sup> For the glove in Renaissance Europe, see Sullybrass and Jones, 2001: 114-32; qt. 116.

<sup>280</sup> Gloves and swords were appropriate iconographic motifs for statesmen. The glove might also be seen as concealing Rubens’ right hand, which was distorted by “gout”; see Laneyrie-Dagen, 2003: 14; “Sa main gauche, nue, les doigts gros déformés par la goutte, est posée sur le pommeau d’ une épée.” Nevertheless, wearing only one glove was a frequent stylistic element in early modern portraiture and appropriate for aristocrats. See e.g. Antony van Dyck’s *Charles I at the Hunt* (Louvre, 1638), with Charles elegantly holding his glove with his gloved hand. For the use of rapier in Rubens’ self-portraits as a sign of social aspirations, prestige and high status, see Büttner, 2006b: 60, 90.

Despite these social attributes, Rubens' gaze seems to be captured in a "moment of melancholy introspection".<sup>281</sup> While still looking straightforwardly at the viewer – as Rubens did in all four self-portraits – his gaze is somewhat distant. This is intensified by the low viewpoint, which creates a sense of self-absorption. His tired eyes might propose a man burdened by the responsibility of office and public engagement. His aged appearance further underlines his melancholic mood. Rubens has entered the third age of life. This is his last self-portrait and depicts Rubens a few years before death, at a time when he suffered from what is recorded as "gout". This portrait, as I will discuss below, registers coping strategies for ageing and disease. As I will argue, despite his advanced years and his suffering body, Rubens presents himself here as a healthy and vigorous man. Ageing effects are not denied, but they are depicted only as far as they support the idea of a well-formed body and mind in its third age and an active man in the public world. Rubens' self-portrait thus presents an alternative to the discussions on the ageing body of the artist mentioned earlier.<sup>282</sup>

The effects of ageing are explicitly visible in the face (fig. 33). The smooth, tight, warm and moist skin of the mature man has given way to a loose and dry epidermis, registering the temperamental change to a colder and dryer constitution of the aged man. Wrinkles bespeak the ravages of time. So, too, do the bags underneath the eyes, the loose flesh around the jaw and his sparse facial hair – medically perceived as an indication of diminished masculinity and a lessening of the innate heat required for procreation. The palette of the skin colour has been changed to paler nuances. Ochre pigments are used

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<sup>281</sup> White, 1987: 291.

<sup>282</sup> For more general discussions on old age, see Thane, 1993, 2000, 2005. For the representation of old age in early modern Europe, see Covey, 1991; and, Campbell (ed.), 2006. With particular reference to the Netherlands, see Desel et al., 1993; and, Janssen, 2005, 2007.

more broadly and in some parts, like the area underneath his left cheek, the under-painting layer of the grey *imprimatura* is exposed, further intensifying the effects of ageing. However, it should be noted that this canvas has suffered from human intervention, ageing and environmental influences, all of which have affected the materials and colouring.<sup>283</sup> The aged appearance of the skin is thus enhanced by craquelure and the partial loss of glazes in flesh tones, which further emphasises the contrast between the light and shadowy parts of the face and hand.<sup>284</sup> Moreover, previous decorative framing and possible exposure to intense light have contributed to a deeper contrast between the framed and the uncovered part.<sup>285</sup> Thus the flesh tones are lighter than they were originally. These ageing effects blur the initial appearance of the skin and complicate our viewing. Yet for all this, it can be said with some certainty that the colouring modifies the reddish, sanguine palette as seen in the Windsor portrait to a less passionate, pale range, appropriate for a more phlegmatic ageing body. Nevertheless, the rose touches on his cheeks, eyelashes, lips and nose illustrate that the blood still nourishes flesh and bones and the “innate heat” of the body has not yet been extinguished. Despite his melancholic gaze, this man is still active and healthy.

In order for Rubens to present himself as a dynamic man, he had to challenge the wider implications and stereotypes of old age. As noted earlier, ageing was explained as a process of changing bodily humours, which had visible, tangible effects on the external appearance, character and behaviour. It was popularly believed that ageing brought ongoing coldness and dryness until finally the innate heat and moisture were completely

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<sup>283</sup> For a technical discussion of the painting, restoration and conservation, see Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, 1996: no. 25, 133-35. Many thanks to Dr Gruber Gerlinde for turning my attention to this catalogue with important technical information. For a wider discussion regarding these issues, see Hall, 1992: 1-13.

<sup>284</sup> Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, 1996: 133-35.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*: 133.



lost. It was also thought that humoral changes diminished actions, movement, passions and emotions, making the old person more sluggish, passive and weaker. These effects stereotyped the image of the old man. Broadly speaking, early modern attitudes towards old age were twofold: physical decline could attract ridicule or provoke laughter and scorn, while spiritual and mental growth could induce respect.<sup>286</sup>

Ageing has always been seen in ambiguous terms.<sup>287</sup> In the classical literature, there was no common attitude towards old age. Aristotle, Juvenal and Maximian emphasise the decline of growing old, both bodily and mental.<sup>288</sup> Cicero and Seneca, on the other hand, praise the mental sharpness of age, in spite of bodily decline.<sup>289</sup> These views were well disseminated in early modern treatises on old age.<sup>290</sup> In *De Sanitate tuenda*, a treatise of much influence in the early modern period, Galen advises elderly people that by following a proper regimen of diet and physical and mental exercise, health can be preserved and life extended.<sup>291</sup> Galen's optimism in handling ageing seems to have received a new boost in Rubens' time when scepticism, reinforced by the Reformation and scientific revolution, encouraged the belief in medical intervention in the fight against the infirmities of old

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<sup>286</sup> Janssen, 2007. For more comprehensive, recent studies on old age in the early modern period, see Campbell (ed.), 2006; Schäfer, 2010; Skenazi, 2013.

<sup>287</sup> Coudert, 2007: 535-36.

<sup>288</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, II, ch. 13. Aristotle, for instance, describes old people as weak, insecure, lacking in confidence, hesitant, cynical, distrustful, suspicious, small-minded, not generous, cowardly, querulous, shameless and fearful because of their chilly temperament. They love life and themselves and they are interested in what is useful and not noble, living through memories of the past, while present passions and emotions fade away. Thus they are more open to self-control and reasoning, but are guided by utility and not moral feeling. Juvenal, *Satires*, X; Maximian, *Elegies*.

<sup>289</sup> Cicero, *Cato Maior De senectute*; Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, esp. 12, 26, 30, 36, 58; Luce, 1993.

<sup>290</sup> For the influence of these classical texts in the early modern period, see Zerbi, 1988: 309-18; Parkin, 2003: 87-89; with an emphasis on visual representations, see Janssen, 2005, and 2007: 437-83.

<sup>291</sup> Galen, 1951: V.

age.<sup>292</sup> It is in the seventeenth century that Allison Coudert sees a change in the attitude towards ageing and the rise of the belief that old age can be cured.<sup>293</sup>

Early modern medical discussions of old age largely follow the classical argument that health can be preserved by modifying an individual's daily habits and regimen.<sup>294</sup> Physicians and humanists often address old age as a period of more intense intellectual activity and spiritual flourishing. Typical of this is the popular treatise on geriatrics, *Gerontocomia*, in which the Italian physician Gabriele Zerbi (1445-1505) states:

When men become old, in the first part of old age they understand more perfectly and fully because the intellect in us when we become old is more efficient. Constancy indeed is more adapted to the same people because this age retains cold and dryness well. Similarly, because of the lack of heat it retains and mingles understanding among the operations of reason and wisdom because of much experience and the memory of many things associated with cold and dryness.<sup>295</sup>

This period of mental creativity and intelligence comes before the last “decrepit period” which brings “decline of the entire body.”<sup>296</sup> For Zerbi, old age begins between the

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<sup>292</sup> Coudert, 2007.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.: 536-37.

<sup>294</sup> Schäfer, 2006.

<sup>295</sup> Zerbi, 1988 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1489): 30.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

thirtieth and fortieth year and lasts up to the fiftieth or sixtieth. The quantity and quality of these two stages vary according to the individual.<sup>297</sup>

The phase of mental flourishing that comes before general decline is frequently discussed in early modern treatises. Generally, these locate old age later than Zerbi and address two stages. For the physician Jean Fernel, from the fiftieth year till the sixty-fifth is “prima illa senectus, quae siccum frigidumque corpus efficit, frigidum tamen minus” (“the start of old age, which makes the body dry and cold, but less cold [than dry]”), while the last phase is “decrepita, frigidissima atque siccissima” (“decrepitude concluding life, very cold and very dry”).<sup>298</sup> This discerning of two phases of old age goes back to Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* (c. 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD). In this text, the first phase expands from fifty-six to sixty-eight years, and the second lasts from then until death.<sup>299</sup> The first phase is characterised by spiritual growth, the second by general decline.<sup>300</sup> Anouk Janssen has shown that these two phases are well represented in Netherlandish prints.<sup>301</sup> In a series of prints by Johannes Wierix after Hans Vredeman de Vries published by Pieter Baltens in 1577 in Antwerp, the first stage of old age, between forty-eight and sixty-four years, is represented by men engaging in scholarly activities (fig. 34).<sup>302</sup>

The belief that wisdom comes with experience and advanced years was well embedded in the early modern mentality. Medical, humanistic, political and educational treatises as well as books of manners promoted the notion that where “the body is weakest, there understanding and wisdom is strongest”, as the Neostoic philosopher Justus Lipsius

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid.: 29.

<sup>298</sup> Fernel, 2003: 248-49.

<sup>299</sup> Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, IV, ch. 10.

<sup>300</sup> Thane, 1993: 31-33.

<sup>301</sup> Janssen, 2007; esp. 449-51.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.: 450-51; Hollstein, 1947-1987: vol. 67, no. 1987-93.

wrote.<sup>303</sup> This illuminates another aspect of the relationship between mind and body: strong inner virtues and wisdom could not be diminished by the effects of old age. Rubens indicates his familiarity with the relationship between ageing and wisdom when at the age of fifty-two and in a period of physical decline, he wrote:

To see so many varied countries and courts, in so short a time, would have been more fitting and useful to me in my youth than at my present age. My body would have been stronger, to endure the hardships of travel, and my mind would have been able to prepare itself, by experience and familiarity with the most diverse peoples, for greater things in the future. Now, however, I am expending my declining strength, and no time remains to enjoy the fruits of so many labors, *nisi ut, cum hoc resciero doctior moriar* [unless thereby I shall succeed in dying a wiser man].<sup>304</sup>

The concluding Latin phrase alludes to the knowledge Rubens had attained and subtly indicates his adherence to the belief that wisdom can be achieved despite physical decline. A further challenge for Rubens was the effect of gout, which was thought to be caused by the imbalance of bodily fluids, owing to excesses in eating and drinking as well as sexual overindulgence.<sup>305</sup> The disease was socially linked to court society and was thought of as,

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<sup>303</sup> Lipsius, 1594: I, 13; III, 46.

<sup>304</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 195 to Pierre Dupuy (8 August 1629): 320.

<sup>305</sup> Porter, 1994; Porter and Rousseau, 1998. The publications on gout increased considerably in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Rubens might have been familiar, for example, with those published by the Plantin House in Antwerp, such as that by the Antwerp physician Gerardus Bergensis, *De praeservatione et curatione morbi articularis et calculi libellus*, 1564, or Sylvius Joannes's *De morbi articularii curatione tractatus quatuor*, 1565. Indicative of the connotations of gout in the Neostoic circles which Rubens frequented is Justus Lipsius' poem, c. 1600, in which the author's dead dog Saphyrus is made to say: "And I do, in fact, have

in Roy Porter's words, "the patrician malady".<sup>306</sup> The best way to mitigate painful joints was to follow a temperate diet and sexual moderation, while Girolamo Mercuriale advised that certain exercise could also be helpful, such as walking, vocal training and being transported in a carriage.<sup>307</sup> It is not known whether Rubens indeed had gout or some other sort of arthritic disease, since by the end of the eighteenth century gout was used to describe several types of rheumatism.<sup>308</sup> What matters for the present discussion is that Rubens and his contemporaries identified their ailment as "gout", which clearly carried negative connotations.<sup>309</sup>

To combat unwelcome implications, Rubens gives prominence to his mental but also bodily strength, his temperance and his social status. This is the only one of the four self-portraits in which Rubens enlarged the bodily frame to a three-quarter length. His exposed hands and body do not simply create a majestic image with an aristocratic air, but underline a physical stability. Despite his advanced years, nothing in his image relates to disease or decline. Instead, the upright position suggests a strong body in perfect equilibrium. Furthermore, the standing posture with one hand on the rapier recalls his

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something human about me. The proof? / I drink wine and have the gout which comes from it."; after Papy, 1999b: 188.

<sup>306</sup> Qt. Mayerne, 1676 (published posthumously), trans. Sherley; Porter and Rousseau (eds), 1998; Kümmel, 1990: 27-28.

<sup>307</sup> Mercuriale, 1569: bk. V, ch. XI; bk. VI, ch. V; bk. VI, ch. X. Many thanks to Maria Kavvadia for sharing with me these extracts from her research in progress on Mercuriale and medical gymnastics.

<sup>308</sup> Appelboom, 2005: 681-83; Appelboom suggests that Rubens had rheumatoid arthritis. He identifies the depiction of this disease in some of Rubens' paintings and raises the question of whether Rubens intended by this to open a discussion among doctors and artists. If this is true, Rubens not only would have had a wide knowledge of medicine, since the information in his painting allows modern doctors to identify rheumatoid arthritis, but his works also would have challenged many discussions in medical circles. For the depiction of arthritis in Rubens' paintings and early modern Flemish-Dutch art, see further Dequeker, 1992, 2001, 2010.

<sup>309</sup> On 29 December 1628, Rubens wrote: "These last few days I have been very sick with gout and fever", Rubens, 1955, letter 181 to Gevaerts (29 December 1628): 294; while on 15 February 1639 he described the difficulties caused to his work by the disease: "the gout very often prevents my wielding either pen or brush – and taking up its usual residence, so to speak, in my right hand, hinders me especially from making drawings on a small scale", Rubens, 1955, letter 245 to Philippe Chifflet (15 February 1639): 411. On 2 June 1640, after the artist's death, Gerbier wrote: "Sr. Peeter Rubens, whoe deceased three dayes past off a deflaction which fell on his heart, after some dayes indisposition of ague and goutte", Rubens, 1887-1909, IV: 300.

position within the body politic as a court painter and successful diplomat. A humanist, on the other hand, was more associated with the half-length format and the seated posture.<sup>310</sup> The column, furthermore, responds to the uprightness of the body, suggesting a strong and steady bodily constitution. It might also illustrate moral constancy and mental vibrancy. This interpretation is supported by the prints by De Vries, which relate the ages of man to five architectural orders.<sup>311</sup> Interestingly, Doric columns are preferred for the first creative phase of old age (fig. 34). In this light, the Doric column in Rubens' portrait might suggest wisdom and mental strength. As a symbol of health, enduring bodily strength, mental vibrancy and moral tranquility, the column sharply contrasts with the physiological decline of the "senile body", which "is rendered almost like a ruined and broken building" according to Aristotle's famous metaphor, repeated by Zerbi and visually rendered by De Vries in the last print of his age series. Here, among other motifs, the broken windows and tiles show the decay of the aged, occurring between sixty-four and eighty-years-old (fig. 35).<sup>312</sup> Being sixty-one-years-old, Rubens sublimates the signs of old age into manifestations of mental and physical vigour.

One might argue that this portrait conformed to the guidelines for the learned courtier.<sup>313</sup> Indeed, Rubens responded to some of these. He showed an ongoing reliance on his workshop and offered theoretical advice, thus downplaying the threat which physical decline posed to his professional identity. From 1636, he directed the gigantic commission of paintings for the Torre della Parada, the hunting lodge of Philip IV. From 1637, he continued to offer his *inventio* for the title-pages and frontispieces of the Plantin Press,

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<sup>310</sup> Bomford, 2000: 56.

<sup>311</sup> Jansen, 2007: 450-51, 474-75.

<sup>312</sup> Zerbi, 1988, (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1489): 53.

<sup>313</sup> Campbell, 2002.

while his student Erasmus Quellin was responsible for the practical part, the transference of the designs to paper.<sup>314</sup> Two years before he passed away, Rubens retired to his country house in Steen and was clear that he painted only for pleasure.<sup>315</sup> He responded thus to Giorgio Vasari's (1511-74) advice that the elderly artist should work only as a pastime, and the exhortation of the Italian art critic Raffaello Borghini (1537-88) for retirement, theory and instruction.<sup>316</sup>

This is not to say that Rubens strictly followed guidelines for the elderly artist. Rubens had steadily praised health, fertility, creativity, modesty and constancy, and had cultivated humanism and erudition throughout his life. The quest for health and bodily balance was integral to this inner need to respond with constancy to the fundamental principles and values of his personality, and to secure his future reputation. Though suffering from arthritic disease Rubens did not stop either being creative or procreating. Despite the often severe attacks of arthritis in his last decade, he painted some of his major masterpieces and got married to the sixteen-year-old Helene Fourment, having with her five children. With the *Het Pelsken* (c. 1635-40, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; fig. 36) Rubens conjures up a piece of outstanding creativity, the celebration not only of the body of his young wife, but also of marital pleasures and the couple's fertility.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Voet, 1972, II: 208; this is clearly indicated by the inscription on the copperplates: "E. Quellinus delineavit. Pet. Paul. Rubenius invenit".

<sup>315</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 243 to George Geldorp (2 April 1638): 410.

<sup>316</sup> Vasari, 1568 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 6: 165; Vasari judges that Titian's late works lost perfection due to his physical decline. Campbell, 2002: 323-24; for Titian and old age, see Bostock, 2007: 517-31; and Sohm, 2007: 82-103. Borghini, 1584.

<sup>317</sup> Thøfner, 2004.

### The process of painting: health and image-genesis

This section will suggest that Rubens' image of himself as a vigorous man does not merely embody the link between physical appearance, temperamental balance and bodily and mental creativity, but also responds to the main concern of early modern art theoretical treatises to present the profession of the artist as both a physically and mentally demanding activity. This was not merely part of a strategy to elevate the status of the manual profession of painting. As will be argued, the importance of bodily and mental health and the emphasis on the significant role that the mental genesis of images played in the process of art-making were thought to have a scientific, medical explanation. I will argue that the importance of health for the artist's profession was founded on well-established views of the body and its physiological processes. The fact that Rubens never depicted himself with the accoutrements of the painter might then be explained as an insight into what Rubens perceived the profession of the painter to be. Furthermore, I will argue that the highlighted heads in Rubens' self-portraits aimed at communicating the refined mental processes that art making required.

Art treatises of the period frequently draw the attention of the artist to the preservation of bodily and mental well-being. Franciscus Junius stresses the great importance of health for the artist, although this alone could not guarantee professional prosperity. Junius argues that of great help to the artist is "a reasonably good wit, the advantage of a healthfull body, as also the guiding of a trusty teacher".<sup>318</sup> By quoting Quintilian, he criticises those painters who "*embrace leanness instead of health; infirmity steppeth in the place of judgement*", as well as "*those that are dry, raw bonded, and bloudlesse, use to cloake their*

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<sup>318</sup> Junius, 1638: 15.



*imbelicitie by the most contrary appellation of soundnesse*”.<sup>319</sup> He further criticises fasting, while advising: “*It is not enough that a man be not sicke; hee must be strong, and lively, and lusty. Yea, that man draweth nearest unto infirmitie, who hath no other commendation but of his health.*”<sup>320</sup>

Rubens’ adherence to a disciplined programme and healthy lifestyle in order to preserve his bodily and mental stability and facilitate his work is also repeated by his biographer Roger de Piles, who relates that:

Il se levoit tous les jours à quatre heures du matin, & se faisoit une loy de commencer sa journée par entendre la Messe, à moins qu’il n’en fût empêché par la goutte dont il estoit fort incommodé; apres quoy il se mettoit à l’ouvrage... Comme il se plaisoit extremement à l’ouvrage, il vivoit d’une maniere à pouvoir travailler facilement & sans incommoder sa santé; & c’est pour cela qu’il mangeoit fort peu à disner, de peur que la vapeur des viandes ne l’empeschast de s’appliquer, & que venant à s’appliquer, il n’empeschast la digestion des viandes. Il travailloit ainsi iusqu’à cinq heures du soir, qu’il montoit à cheval pour aller prendre l’air hors de la ville ou sur les remparts, ou il faisoit quelqu’autre chose pour se delasser l’esprit. ... Il avoit neantmoins une grande aversion pour les excés du vin & de la bonne chere, aussi bien que du jeu.

(He rose everyday at four in the morning and made it a rule to start the day with Mass, unless he was prevented by gout by which he was greatly bothered. After Mass he went to work... Because he took great pleasure in his work, he lived in such a manner as to

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.: 228-29.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.: 229.

be able to work easily and without troubling his health. It is for that reason that he eat very little at lunchtime, for fear that the smell of meat should prevent him from working, and conversely, that getting down to work would prevent the digestion of the meat consumed. He worked in this manner until five in the evening when he mounted a horse and set off out of the town or around the ramparts in order to take the air, or he did something else to relax his mind. ...However, he had a great aversion to excesses of wine and good food, as well as to gambling.)<sup>321</sup>

The extract describes a man clearly responding to the advice of art theoreticians and physicians for a disciplined programme and modest habits. De Piles also stresses that Rubens modified his regimen in order to keep his body and mind at the maximum of creativity. By relating the digestion of food to the painting process, de Piles understands painting as a bodily and mental activity. This is not a surprising view, since the early modern understanding of physiological processes directly linked digestion with bodily, mental and spiritual progress.<sup>322</sup> In order to achieve work of high standards, it was necessary to properly regulate the daily regimen. Indicative of Rubens' promotion of a healthy lifestyle is the name of his studio – *Diaeta* – and the construction of his garden as a place of intellectual recreation.<sup>323</sup> Furthermore, the inscription of Juvenal's verses – “mens sana in corpore sano” (“a healthy mind in a healthy body”) – which decorated the artist's garden portico of his house in Antwerp, further reinforces the idea of a well-balanced man

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<sup>321</sup> De Piles, 1677: 213-15; trans. Scott, 2005: 79-80.

<sup>322</sup> The stomach was imagined with a flame at the bottom which “cooked” only the nutritional food, while the other was expelled from the body. Over-eating, over-drinking and chewing greedily could extinguish the flame of the stomach with vapours and corrupted matter could be directed to all the organs, flesh and brain, causing many diseases. For a basic outline of the process, see Albala, 2002: 52-59.

<sup>323</sup> Heinen, 2002.

who worked to sustain bodily and mental vigour.<sup>324</sup> This image explicitly corresponds to the visual self-presentation of Rubens, as suggested earlier.

Besides the inextricable unity of the body and mind, artistic discourses give prominence to the mental capacities and the brain as the place where invention takes place. Accordingly, the artist firstly conceives the idea in the mind and after working this idea in the mental and imaginative faculty of his head, he takes his brushes and proceeds to practice and physical activity.<sup>325</sup> Karel van Mander describes painting as a process

which first arises through inner imaginations of the spirit or the mind before it can be further developed and brought to perfection with the hand...practised by those whose behaviour is suitably tranquil and who lead a regulated life, since without disruption of the senses or internal disturbances of the mind, they would therefore be better suited to occupy their spirit with or devote it to the practice of such a very ingenious art.<sup>326</sup>

Likewise, Junius praises the ability of the ancient “artificers” to successfully use their imaginative faculty to conceive with the mind “an image not unworthy of Jupiter”.<sup>327</sup> The simile recalls the popular Renaissance image of God as the “divino architetto del tempo e della natura”, namely the first artificer who created the world, discovering thus sculpture

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<sup>324</sup> Juvenal, *Satires*, X, 356.

<sup>325</sup> For example, Alberti, 1436, bk. III; trans. Spencer, 1956: 94, “Never take the pencil or brush in hand if you have not first constituted with your mind all that you have to do and how you have to do it. It will certainly be better to correct the errors with the mind than to remove them from the painting.” Also, Armenini, (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1586) 1977: 96, 119, 122.

<sup>326</sup> Mander, 1994 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1603-1604): fol. 225<sup>r</sup>, 158.

<sup>327</sup> Junius, 1638: bk. I, ch. II, 21.

and painting.<sup>328</sup> While the senses, Junius explains, stir the inner imagination or *phantasie*, the mind creates the image: “the greatest part of invention consists in the force of our minde; seeing our minde must first of all be moved, our mind must conceive the images of things, our minde must in a manner bee transformed unto the nature of the conceived things”.<sup>329</sup> After the conception of the image in the external world, a process takes place in the imaginative faculty of the mind. There, the conceived matter is handled to create a new image, seen or unseen, which re-enters “into the presence of things” organised in a story.<sup>330</sup> This process of image genesis elevates the artist to the status of an inspired creator.

This understanding of the process of artistic inspiration, which goes back to Aristotle, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, is based on the well-established understanding of the biological processes of the human body.<sup>331</sup> A description similar to Junius’ account of the mental process of image creation is provided by the *Physiologia* of Jean Fernel, but in a more medical language:

ab externis rebus lacessiti sensus simulachra [*sic*] spectráque ab eis emissa recipient, quae deinde interiorem sentiendi vim impellunt: haec tum formas atque imagines rerum quas sensus praebuerunt, retinet et consignat in se. ...Effigies illae spectráque rerum cerebro inusta atque insculpta, obiectum efficiuntur facultatis eius quae fingit, quemadmodum res externae sensuum. ...Ab illis ergo excitata alia quaedam facultas

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<sup>328</sup> Vasari, 1550: preface to “The Lives of the Artists”.

<sup>329</sup> Junius, 1638: bk I, ch. II, qt. bk III, ch. I, 231.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*: bk. I, ch. II, bk. III, ch. V.

<sup>331</sup> Aquinas relates these ideas in several extracts of his *Summa Theologiae* (see e.g. I, q. 78, art. 4) and more extensively in his Commentary on Aristotle’s *De memoria et reminiscentia*; see also Carruthers, 2008: 276-79.

quae fictrix appellatur...obiecta spectra apprehendit et concipit: atque vt in sensu tria quidem sunt, res obiecta, vis sentiens, et actio quae ex illorum congressu interuenit...

(When the senses are stimulated by things outside, they receive phantoms and emanations sent out by them, which then incite the internal sensory power. This power then holds and places in its record the forms and semblances of things provided by the senses. ...These phantoms and emanations of things are branded and carved on the brain, and are made an object of the faculty that imagines [“fingit”], like external sensory things. ...Then there is another faculty aroused by them...that is called the imagining one...it grasps the emanations presented to it. And there are three components in sensation: the thing presented, the sentient power, and the action that comes into play from their encounter...)<sup>332</sup>

Hence, the images grasped by the senses are experienced internally in a process called “effictio”, which produces further new images.<sup>333</sup> These images are preserved in memory, recorded “in cerebri corpora...citra vllum materiae vestigium” (“on the cerebral body, without any trace of material”), until the faculty of fantasy recalls them in the same or a new form.<sup>334</sup> It is important to clarify that this process of image-making takes place in the head, in the so-called “animal faculty” with the brain as its primary seat and citadel of the mind. The animal faculty is recognised as the supreme faculty (the other two being the “vital”, which resided in the heart, and the “natural” in the liver) and is responsible for the origin of sensation and movement, while it is also praised for virtues found only in human

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<sup>332</sup> Fernel, 2003, trans. Forrester: 338-39.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.: 338-41.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.: 478-79.

beings: learning, reasoning, judgment, intelligence, prudence and wisdom.<sup>335</sup> The place of the head at the top of the body was believed to indicate its supremacy over the other bodily parts.<sup>336</sup> Furthermore, the human mind was regarded as “a divine gift”, which could contemplate eternal things, partake of immortality and supervise the body.<sup>337</sup> In addition, the head owed its significance to its “wonderful net” (“rete mirabile”). This was imagined as a mesh, where the vital spirits were refined to animal spirits.<sup>338</sup>

Rubens was surely familiar with the contemporary understanding of the activities and divine properties of the mind. This is evident in the description of Rubens by the English diplomat William Sanderson:

*Rubens* would (with his arms across) sit musing on his work for some time; and in an instant in the liveliness of spirit, with a nimble hand would force out, his over-charged *brain* into description, as not to be contained in the Compass of ordinary practice, but by a violent driving on of the passion. The *Commotions* of the mind, are not to be cooled by slow performance.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> For the faculties of the soul, see Fernel, 2003: bk. 5.

<sup>336</sup> This was famously addressed by Plato in his *Timaeus* (44d-e), who related the spherical shape of the head to that of the universe. To this theory Christological connotations were added, with the head seen as being closer to the heavens; Fernel, 2003: 100-101.

<sup>337</sup> Fernel, 2003: 392-93, 494-503, 552-53.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*: 102-105. While the existence of the *rete mirabile* had been challenged in the sixteenth century, within medical treatises intense debate over the concept remained until well into the eighteenth century. See Pranghofer, 2009.

<sup>339</sup> Sanderson, 1658: 34.

The quotation suggests that Rubens not only performed according to the physiological process of image-genesis, but that the diplomat was able to trace this process and describe it accordingly. Painting is articulated here first and foremost as a mental activity of brilliant spirits and vibrant brain, which being overcharged – meaning probably with images and good spirits – gives birth to further images, seemingly moved by divine force. The heat of the mind is then passed to the performance, to a quick, passionate bodily activity. The externalised activity of painting is downplayed in order to highlight the mental, spiritual genesis of images, which are born in the mind before being materialised in the artistic medium.<sup>340</sup> However, it is through his “nimble hand” that the painter, like other anatomists, externalises his divine force.<sup>341</sup>

The concept of mental image-generation provides an additional interpretation of the visual choices Rubens made in his self-portraits. They suggest he especially highlighted the head in both portraits as a way of conveying the prevalence of the animal faculty and mental activities, as against the lower part of the body. In the Windsor portrait the lower body is absent, while in the Vienna portrait it is only roughly realised. Thus the mental faculty is foregrounded over the natural or nourishing faculty – responsible for humbler functions and passions.<sup>342</sup> Two sources of intellectual power are further underlined: the forehead and eyes. In both cases, the forehead is the most luminous part of the face. Kate

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<sup>340</sup> For Rubens’ mystical inspiration and artistic creativity, see Davis, 2006.

<sup>341</sup> In his discussion on Rembrandt’s *Anatomy of Dr Tulp* (1632, Mauritshuis, The Hague), William Heckscher (1958: 73) emphasises that eloquence and nimbleness of the hands were thought as the most important characteristics of the early modern anatomist. He also argues that an anatomical dissection that begins with the hand, as happens in Rembrandt’s painting, should be explained as “thematic emphasis”. As Heckscher notes, starting with the hand deviates from reality, since anatomical dissections in this period began with the stomach (65-66). In reference to the same painting, William Schupbach (1982: 23, 27-30) explains the emphasis on Tulp’s left hand as relating the divinity of man.

<sup>342</sup> Fernel, 2003: bk. 5. For a different point of view on this belief and an emphasis on books of manners, see Muir, 1997 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.): ch. 3-4.

Bomford has noted in her exploration of Rubens' friendship portraits that the highlighted foreheads aimed to convey the intellectual power of the sitters.<sup>343</sup> The medical interpretation proposed here explains why Rubens chose this way to express intellectuality. As well as emphasising mental capacities, the lighter and less pink tones of the forehead can be also seen as externalising the temperature of the brain: reasoning capacities were traditionally perceived as being dependent on the brain's coldness and moisture.<sup>344</sup>

In addition to all this, the sparkling eyes, especially of the Windsor portrait, reflect high mental qualities, while the white thin line just above his right lower eyelid, which Rubens often used for his sitters, intensifies the luminosity of the gaze and indicates the moisture of the eye. Vision was one of the crucial functions of the animal spirits in the head. Through the eyes "videndi spiritus inuehitur" ("the spirit of seeing travels").<sup>345</sup> The eye was seen as being the means to internalise external images, as well as vice versa, as through the pupils "images and spirits of things leap forth".<sup>346</sup> For Plato the eyes were "φωσφόρα", namely carriers of light and the pure fire which is inside the human body, and were thus the first organ to be made and put in the head.<sup>347</sup> Early modern physicians adhered to the belief that the position of the eyes at the top of the body evidenced their significance.<sup>348</sup> Furthermore, Galen's theory that during vision the cerebral spirit emerged through the eye was widely disseminated.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Bomford, 2000: 74.

<sup>344</sup> Martensen, 2004: 14.

<sup>345</sup> Siraisi, 1990b: 108; qt. Fernel, 2003: 106-107.

<sup>346</sup> Fernel, 2003: 114-15.

<sup>347</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*: 45b-c.

<sup>348</sup> Fernel, 2003: 112-13, 618.

<sup>349</sup> Siegel, 1970: 261-76.



That Rubens perceived the face and especially the eyes as being a vehicle for intellectuality is explicitly articulated in a letter to his friend Peiresc. Peiresc had given his portrait to Rubens in accordance with the usual humanist custom of exchanging self-portraits as a substitute in the absence of a friend and to eliminate the distance between them (a purpose served today by photographs). Although Rubens was delighted with the present, he expressed dissatisfaction with the portrayal of Peiresc's eyes:

Your portrait has brought the greatest pleasure to me, and also to those who have seen it. They are entirely satisfied with the likeness, but I confess that I do not see reflected in this face a certain intellectual power, and that emphasis in the glance, which seem to me to belong to your genius, but which is not easy for anyone to render in a picture.<sup>350</sup>

In the light of the present discussion and the exploration of scientific notions, two interesting points can be underlined regarding Rubens' critique of Peiresc's portrait. First, that Rubens expected the materialised image to convey the mental and spiritual qualities of the sitter, the depiction of which presented a challenge for the painter. Second, and synecdochically, that these mental properties were indeed seen as being mirrored in the individual's external appearance, as physiological theory and art treatises likewise asserted. If the challenge for the painter was to capture these abstract qualities of the sitter through conjoined mental and physical activities, it becomes clear why Rubens never depicted

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<sup>350</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 216 (August, 1630): 367.

himself in the act of painting. For Rubens painting was not merely a manual activity, but a more complicated process of bodily and mental creativity.

To conclude, by using ageing as a lens to view the body of the artist, this chapter has argued that the visual construction of Rubens' own body encapsulates qualities and properties which go beyond the external appearance and pure materiality. The medical point of view has illuminated a largely neglected aspect of the early modern body, namely as a vehicle for internal and external physiological processes, material and immaterial qualities, which in a portrait are externalised through design, colour, medium, and artistic choices and strategies. Through the process of painting, the canvas becomes a field of force and the forum for interactions between the living body and the painted body of the artist, the body of the observer and the physicality of brush and pigments. Through these interactions, the painted body is enlivened. Like the living body the painted body was expected to give insight into immateriality and inner processes and values which also reside at the surface of the body. This exploration of physiological notions has also demonstrated that bodily characteristics of early modern portraiture should not be anachronistically interpreted as a metaphor or symbol of internal properties conveyed in an abstract way, but they should be understood as integrated into the very materiality of painting.

Returning to the quotation by de Piles which opened the discussion of this chapter, we can make a further reading in the light of the above analysis. De Piles' description of Rubens is grounded in physiological theory, with the body mirroring mental and spiritual characteristics, behaviour and manners. "Les yeux brillans, mais d' un feu temperé" can now bear a more literal interpretation: Rubens' eyes reflect the innate heat and spirits of his

body. His “humeur commode” does not simply show an “obliging mood” as suggested by the translation; it means that his bodily humours and constitution were good, affable and easygoing. His “esprit vif & pénétrant” indicates a piercing, penetrating, vibrant and agile mind and spirit, perfectly in tune with his “majestic bearing”, beauty, symmetry and health of his face, skin, pleasing behaviour and character. The word “naturellement” stresses further that this appearance was not fictitious but gifted by nature. Before accusing the biographer of exaggeration and flattery, we should remember that his description responds to well-established scientific notions and conventional beliefs, which would have informed the viewing process of bodies. Medical notions can therefore give insight into a better understanding of the body, and can foster a reconsideration of the early modern painted body as it was expected to be seen: a materialised diagnostic map of immaterial qualities.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE PHYSICIAN-ARTIST AND THE ANATOMY OF PIGMENTS: TRACING RUBENS' CONVERSATION WITH THEODORE DE MAYERNE (1629-31)

That man, being a compagnable creature, loveth naturally the conversation of other men, and doing the contrarie, he doth offend nature herself...conversation is not onely profitable, but moreover necessary to the perfection of man, who must confesse that hee is lyke the Bee which cannot live alone...so man is created for the use of man...to communicate together common profites, in giving and receiving, uniting and binding themselves together by artes, occupations, and faculties...no pleasure to bee received without companie.<sup>351</sup>

In one of the most popular, early modern treatises on civil conversation, Stefano Guazzo (1530–93) opens the conversation complaining that he suffers from melancholy. The interlocutor of the text, Anniball, argues that the cure is to exchange solitariness for company and conversation.<sup>352</sup> The ensuing discussion then presents conversation as the model of excellence. Guazzo's treatise is indicative of a wider emphasis among early modern humanists on conversation as a key social activity.<sup>353</sup> However, Guazzo does not restrict his discussion to polite talking, outward expressions and manners, but explains *civil*

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<sup>351</sup> Guazzo, 1581 (1<sup>st</sup> Engl. trans.; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. in Italian, 1574): 4<sup>v</sup>, 12<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>352</sup> A bit later in this century it was translated into French (1579), English (1581), and Latin (1585) in several editions. A Dutch translation of Guazzo's book appeared in 1603 under the title *Van den heuschen burgerlycken ommegangh*. For the influence of Guazzo on Karel van Mander, see De Mambro Santos, 1998.

<sup>353</sup> Bryson, 1998: 151-92, esp. 158.

*conversazione* in terms of sociability, social interaction, communication, friendship and learning. As Anniball makes clear: “my meaning is, that civile conversation is an honeste commendable and vertuous kinde of living in the world.”<sup>354</sup> By dispensing thus with the self-fashioning of aristocratic circles, which Castiglione’s *Courtier* and Della Casa’s *Galateo* popularly address, Guazzo’s treatise reaches a wider audience beyond courts and cities. “So I understand”, Anniball remarks, “civile conversation not having relation to the citie, but consideration to the maners and conditions which make it civile”.<sup>355</sup>

Guazzo’s *conversazione* is among the late sixteenth-century books which advocated what Peter Miller calls the “Peirescean virtues”: “friendship, constancy, self-control, beneficence, and conversation”.<sup>356</sup> In his study on Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637), the French humanist, antiquarian and Rubens’ friend, Miller argues that the model of living which Guazzo promoted spread to academies and scholars.<sup>357</sup> Conversation, sociability and knowledge were inextricably linked for Guazzo, who argued that “the beginning and end of learning dependeth of conversation”, and who highlighted company as a means of achieving learning instead of books.<sup>358</sup> This view of *civil conversazione* as encapsulating learned sociability, communication and virtue was much aspired to by early modern humanists and learned elite society and can also be traced in Rubens’ friendships.

The re-evaluation at this time of friendship and intellectual exchange was largely based on discussions of classical authors, such as Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca, whose writings were revived and often modernised. They provided models for self-guidance, a set

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<sup>354</sup> Guazzo, 1581: 22<sup>f</sup>-22<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*: 22<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>356</sup> Miller, 2000: 37. Among the books which advocated the “Peirescean virtues”, Miller also mentions Montaigne’s *Essais* (1580, 1588), Lipsius’ *De Constantia* (1584) and Seneca’s *De beneficiis*.

<sup>357</sup> Miller, 2000: 55.

<sup>358</sup> Guazzo, 1581: 14<sup>f</sup>-16<sup>f</sup>.

of social practices and even fostered political debates.<sup>359</sup> The *locus classicus* of friendship, which steadily pervades and defines the humanistic relationships in the early modern period, is Aristotle's discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, IX.<sup>360</sup> Here, friendship is one of the most important virtues, encompassing utility, enjoyment, benevolence and mutual affection, and is thus a means of achieving *εὐδαιμονία* (happiness). Perfect friendship (*τέλεια φιλία*) is described as follows:

...the friendship of good men is good, being augmented by their companionship; and they are thought to become better too by their activities and by improving each other; for from each other they take the mould of the characteristics they approve – whence the saying ‘Noble deeds from noble men.’<sup>361</sup>

*Τέλεια φιλία* is cultivated only between virtuous men and has the power, through practice and intercourse, to transform and improve the friends, so as to be the means of achieving noble deeds. The creative interaction between two virtuous men thus brings them “common profites”, as Guazzo remarks above, which can expand to all sorts of knowledge and sharing. This recalls Seneca's popular maxim: “No good thing is pleasant to possess, without friends to share it.”<sup>362</sup> In a broader sense, friendship was also seen as

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<sup>359</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia* and *De officiis*. Seneca, *De beneficiis* and *Epistulae morales*, II, VI, IX, XI, XXXV, XXXVIII, LXII, LXXXI, XCIV, CIX. For the role of friendship in political debates see e.g. Miller, 2001.

<sup>360</sup> For a comprehensive study on Aristotelian friendship, see Smith Pangle, 2003. For the dissemination of ancient discussions on friendship in the early modern period, see Lochman, López and Hutson, 2011; 3-9; Hyatte, 1994: ch. 1.

<sup>361</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Ross, 2009 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1925), IX: 1172a, 10-15; <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>.

<sup>362</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae morales*, trans. Gummere, 1962: VI, 4.

contributing to the socio-political order of the *polis* and could “hold states together”. Aristotle maintains that law-givers should care more about friendship than justice, because “when men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well”.<sup>363</sup> This politicised sense of friendship is frequently discussed in early modern writings, which, like those of the ancients, contend “that harmonious relations among individual citizens are the foundation for a harmonious state.”<sup>364</sup> Neostoical thinkers similarly advocated friendship, arguing that it benefited the whole society.<sup>365</sup> Justus Lipsius’ instruction of his nine-year-old great-nephew Willem Grevius, in 1602, indicates the universalism of Neostoic friendship:

For we are born to be an example [to others] and even a help: to help ourselves, then others, and to reckon that we are limbs of one body. Great is the world, but it is one state. Let us join together to our mutual advantage, and let us train ourselves for this goal from our childhood.<sup>366</sup>

Rubens as an international man of friendship, social interaction and sharing, who crossed national and religious boundaries, has not been systematically researched. Two studies, however, have addressed his activities as a friend. Mark Morford has looked at Rubens in the company of Justus Lipsius and has explored the influence of Neostoicism in

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<sup>363</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Ross, 2009, VIII: 1155a, 20-25; <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>.

<sup>364</sup> For the contribution of friendship to civil society, see Cicero, *De amicitia*; and, Lochman, López and Hutson, 2011: 6-7; Fiore, 1997; qt. Hyatte, 1994: 2.

<sup>365</sup> Morford, 1991: 24.

<sup>366</sup> Lipsius, ep. Misc. 4.40; qt. after Morford, 1991: 27.

Rubens' social networks.<sup>367</sup> Kate Bomford, as mentioned in the previous chapter, has provided insight into the friendship among humanists in the early modern Southern Netherlands, with particular reference to Rubens and his intellectual sitters.<sup>368</sup> More importantly for my present purposes, Bomford has underlined the spiritual and practical dimension of friendship. It was founded on wisdom, learning and virtue, its interactions generated “spiritual children”, in the form either of texts or images, and these in turn communicated virtue, learning and creativity.<sup>369</sup>

In this chapter, I wish to focus on a little-discussed friendship that flourished during Rubens' diplomatic mission to London (5 June 1629 – 5 March 1630) between the painter and the French, Swiss-born, Huguenot, Sir Theodore Turquet de Mayerne (1573-1655). Up to this time, Mayerne had achieved great social and professional recognition, being chief physician to King Charles I and the royal family and having amassed great privileges and riches. Besides his great input into medicine, Mayerne owed his international popularity to his engagement with socio-political matters and his activity as a secret political agent for the king of England, operating as a linchpin for the French Huguenots.<sup>370</sup> Being both – Mayerne and Rubens – members of the urban patriciate, their association would have been motivated by common aspirations to civic honour, reputation and advancement of

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<sup>367</sup> Morford, 1991.

<sup>368</sup> Bomford: 2000, 2003.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> For a short biography of Mayerne, see Trevor-Roper, 2004. For an extensive biography with an emphasis on his socio-political persona, see Trevor-Roper, 2006. For an emphasis on Mayerne's contribution to medicine, see Nance, 2001. Mayerne significantly popularised chemical and alchemical recipes in England, which were largely incorporated into the London *pharmacopoeia*. He also became famous for British coronation oil, the calomel medicine for the skin, and the curative properties he attributed to the mineral waters and baths.

Posthumously, some of his notes were published under his name: treatise on gout, trans. Thomas Sherley (1676); a book with food recipes, *Archimagirus Anglo-Gallicus* (1658); *Mayernii praxis medica*, 2 vols. (1690-96), compiled by his godson Theodore de Vaux; and *Mayernii opera medica*, 1700, published by Joseph Browne on the initiative of Sir Theodore Colladon. For more information, see Trevor-Roper, 2006: 367-68.



knowledge. While an exploration of their acquaintance can contribute to the broader discourses of the institution of friendship in early modern Europe, more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, tracing their intercourse will illuminate the meshing and exchange of medical and painterly knowledge.

This chapter will explore how immaterial concepts and abstract qualities of friendship and knowledge-exchange are integrated into the materiality and physicality of painting and writing. The main focus of the present discussion are the *civil conversazione*'s material results – the “spiritual children” of Rubens and Mayerne’s – which testify to the creative aspect of their conversation. These are the sketch and the portrait of Mayerne by Rubens, as well as the recipes which Rubens contributed to Mayerne’s famous manuscript on art. My starting point is a letter sent by Mayerne to Rubens. The analysis of the objects accentuates conversation as the core of their relationship. These objects are the spiritual offspring of friendship.

The visual language of the sketch closely corresponds to the letter’s written style – both are characterised by spontaneity and informality – whereas that of the more formal painting suggests a different familiarity between the painter and the sitter and his medical profession. I understand a portrait not as a static object, but as an interactive process, what has been called “portrait transaction”.<sup>371</sup> I suggest that Mayerne’s painterly body should be seen as a locus and forum of conversation and exchange between the artist and the sitter, with the painted body standing for an embodiment of *civil conversazione*.

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<sup>371</sup> Woodall, 1997: 20; Rosenthal, 1997; Lomas, 1997; Jordanova, 2000: 23, 140; Jordanova, 2010: 27.

While historians have expanded their view on the communication modes of early modern sociability, exploring the interactions between oral and written and/or printed speech, the contribution of visuality has not been seriously considered.<sup>372</sup> The few scholars that have studied visuality in relation to sociability and/or friendship have more or less restricted themselves to iconography, the figural representation of friends and social interactions, or the portrait as an object of exchange.<sup>373</sup> The materiality and handling of the brush, oils, colours and chalk as conveying sociability and conversation have been entirely overlooked. By focusing therefore on the relationship between Rubens and Mayerne, this chapter shows that communication is better traced through a variety of media and materials, which can provide a fuller picture of early modern conversation.

#### The sketch as a *ricordo* of *civil conversazione* and exchange

In his letter to Rubens dating 25 March 1631 – the only surviving letter between the two men, but not the only textual source to evidence their association – Mayerne thanks Rubens for the portrait he sent him, recognised today as the Carolina canvas (1630-31, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; figs 24-26). He also praises the painter’s “vertu” (“virtue”), the “concurrence entre l’ esprit et la main” (“competition between mind and hand”), the “graces immortelles” (“immortal grace”) and his “incomparable pinceau” (“incomparable brush”).<sup>374</sup> Significantly, Mayerne remarks the “faveurs particulières” he

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<sup>372</sup> See e.g. Crick and Walsham (eds), 2004; Tenger and Trolander, 2010: 1043-45.

<sup>373</sup> For the social interaction and conversation of elite society in Rubens’ painting *Garden of Love* (or *Conversatie à la mode*, c. 1633, Prado), see Goodman, 1992. For letter and portrait exchange, see e.g. the study by Wojciehowski on the friendship between Erasmus, Peter Giles and Thomas More, 2011: 45-63.

<sup>374</sup> Add. MS 20921: fol. 9<sup>v</sup>-10<sup>r</sup>; for a French transcription of the letter, see Bouvier, 1937: 201-202. Based on this letter, Huemer suggested that the canvas must have been gifted to Mayerne on the occasion of his second

received from Rubens and the “bonnes heures” they spent together. But how can we gain insight into these “bonnes heures” and the intercourse developed between the two men?

The first visual evidence of their contact is the sketch of Mayerne by Rubens, today in the British Museum (fig. 37). Mayerne is portrayed half-length, standing against a plain dark background and holding in his right hand a glove.<sup>375</sup> The drawing must have been used as a *ricordo* – a study for the Carolina portrait.<sup>376</sup> It is in very good condition, in contrast to the Carolina canvas, and has never undergone conservation (at least after the early/mid 1970’s when records began).<sup>377</sup>

The drawing, in my view, is a *ricordo* not only of Mayerne’s physical characteristics, but also of the conversation between the two men. Before we explore the detail of this, it is important to recall that sitting for a portrait in the early modern period was a social occasion, with the painter adopting the role of a spectacular performer. The description of Rubens painting by the English diplomat William Sanderson, quoted in the preceding chapter, colourfully relates the performative character of the painterly process. Painting is described as a process of vivid theatricality, with Rubens experiencing a sort of bodily, mental and spiritual euphoria.<sup>378</sup> However, the artist was also conscious that he was under the scrutiny of spectators, whom he attempts to entertain by transforming painting into a

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wedding, and that Rubens probably intended to paint a portrait of his wife, for which there is no further evidence (1977: 180, no. 47).

<sup>375</sup> For the glove as an attribute of nobility, see here ch. 2: 102, and esp. fn. 279-80.

<sup>376</sup> Huemer, 1977: 176-78, no. 46. For the drawing, see Huemer, 1977: 178, no. 46a; Hearn, 2011: 17; Rowlands, 1977: no. 158, 118; Stainton and White, 1987; White, 1987. A second type of canvas of Mayerne with a glove, a version of which today is in the New York University Art Collection, closely follows the sketch.

<sup>377</sup> Thanks to Caroline Barry, Head of Pictorial Art Sections, British Museum. Also, special thanks to Noelle Ocon, Conservator of Paintings, North Carolina Museum of Art, for so kindly providing the examination report of the canvas (August 2008). The report asserts the poor condition of the canvas and mentions “pinpoint loses”, “small round voids” and “ultraviolet/visible fluorescence”.

<sup>378</sup> See here, ch. 2: 118-19.

fabulous experience and inviting his audience to participate. This is clearly shown by the testimony of the general physician to the Danish court, Otto Sperling, who, in a well-known quotation, documents his experience:

We visited the very famous and eminent painter Rubens, whom we found at work. While he was painting he was having Tacitus read to him and at the same time he was dictating a letter. We remained silent, for fear of disturbing him, but he spoke to us without thereby interrupting his work, and allowing the reading to continue, he went on with the dictation of the letter and replied to our questions at the same time, as if he wanted to furnish proofs of his great gifts.<sup>379</sup>

Rubens is presented here as a marvellous performer or showman. He does not only use his bodily and mental gifts to the maximum, but he simultaneously amuses the company of his visitors and fosters conversation. At the same time Sperling adds, Rubens speaks with his assistants and students, giving advice and correcting their work. The fact that all these people – visitors, painters, a reader and a scribe – are together in the same room suggests painting as a process of interaction and a social occasion of enjoyment and exchange.<sup>380</sup> The early modern studio was a place where the artist could display his social agility, and as Karel van Mander advised, turn friends to buyers and buyers to friends; a

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<sup>379</sup> Hymans, 1887: 150; qt. after Baudouin, 1989: 337-38.

<sup>380</sup> For the performativity of early modern painting, see Weststeijn, 2008.

place Ricardo de Mambro Santos called a “civil conversazione pittorica”.<sup>381</sup> The act of painting, therefore, is at the core of a complex procedure which engages several individuals of different backgrounds, and provokes discussion and apprehension through a multi-sensory experience.

A similar process could be imagined while Rubens was painting Mayerne’s portrait. The gravity of both participants as well as their sociable natures might have transformed painting into a social occasion, with Rubens entertaining his illustrious sitter and other members of polite society. In this scenario, the sketch is an amalgam of the identities of, and interactions between, the painter, sitter, spectators, interlocutors and friends, with the imaged Mayerne being not simply a physical likeness of the physician but an embodiment of given social relations, circumstances and exchanges. Whereas there is a lack of detailed information about this particular event, focusing on the materiality of the portrait can unfold the conversation and the familiarity that existed between the sitter and the painter. I also suggest, as we will see below, that a profound interest in the physiological elaboration of Mayerne’s face might have been motivated by the intellectual exchange between the two men.

A closer look at the technique of the sketch, whose hybridity has escaped scholars’ attention, suggests the familiarity between sitter and painter (fig. 38). The majority of Rubens’ drawings are preparations for paintings and therefore part of a working process. However, Rubens was exceptional in also producing sketches as an end in themselves, such as the sketch of his second wife H el ene Fourment (c. 1630-31, The Courtauld

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<sup>381</sup> Weststeijn terms it a “showroom” and meeting place which attracted international visitors. Ibid: 43, 47; Melion, 1991: 26.

Gallery, London; fig. 39). “The portrait drawings that Rubens made of members of his family”, Ann-Marie Logan remarks, “seem to have been created as private studies, probably meant largely for the artist’s own enjoyment.”<sup>382</sup> In those portraits, intimacy is often conveyed through expressive eyes or a slight smile, as in the sketch portrait of Isabella Brant (c. 1621, British Museum, London; fig. 40). It is also communicated through his preferred technique of the *trois crayons* – black, red and white chalks.<sup>383</sup> Although red chalk had not yet attained the popularity it enjoyed during the eighteenth century, “the golden age of red chalk” – reaching its apogee in Watteau’s hands – sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists exploited its vital colouristic effects in drawings of human flesh.<sup>384</sup> Rubens often used red chalk in his drawings to render the flesh tones. In this way, he adds naturalness to the skin and further suggests the warm relationship between painter and sitter.

The fact that Rubens often made chalk portrait sketches on paper for family or close friends indicates that he considered Mayerne to be a person of his close circle. While in England, Rubens also drew with a high degree of finish an informal study on paper of his friend and patron Thomas Howard, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Arundel (1585-1646). Over the top of black and red chalk, the painter has used pen and brush in brown ink (c. 1629-30; fig. 41). However, what makes the drawing of Mayerne unique is the significant cluster of media in combination with the liveliness and swiftness of the brush. In my opinion, this constitutes an explicit documentation of the familiarity between the sitter and the painter. The head and the collar are executed in oils, the rest in black and red chalk with some grey wash on

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<sup>382</sup> Logan, 2004: 12.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Prat, 2011: 21.

the background and on the cloak. Besides the face, which is in high detail, the rest of the body is drawn roughly. The expressiveness of this informal representation is highlighted by the chalk underneath the oils, as well as by the handling of the oils themselves. Rubens rarely used oils in portraits on paper, and then only for touching in highlights.<sup>385</sup> It is through the physicality, therefore, of the materials and the brush – what Bellori would probably term Rubens’ “*furiam del pennello*” – that the familiarity between the two men and their shared *bonnes heures* are expressed.<sup>386</sup>

Moreover, I also believe that the sharing of knowledge is suggested by the colouring of the skin, to which both physicians and painters paid particular attention (as discussed in the previous chapter). The extra care which is given to the physiology of the skin suggests that during its painting a discussion on the human body might have taken place which was also expressed visually. Given the medical profession of the sitter, Rubens may have wished to show off his skills in enlivening the body. Rubens used very few colours – white, black, ochre, red and blue – which nevertheless create on the canvas a wide range of nuances. The lively, *sanguine*, blood-red chalk of the first layer is covered by the oils, leaving some chalk parts exposed to appear almost unnoticed under the epidermal oil layer.

Through the transparent scrolls of the red chalk, the light of the paper is shown coming through to the surface to meet the upper, oily skin. In turn, the upper, moist epidermis permeates the chalky, dry membrane in a sort of osmotic process. Both the red chalk and the pinkish, oil nuances indicate the warmth of blood and hence leave no doubt of the innate fire and healthiness of the sitter. In some parts of the cheeks, it could even be

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<sup>385</sup> An exception seems to be a *Head of a Youth*, attributed to Rubens’ early period in Italy (1601-1602, Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, The Suida Manning Collection), which is fully painted in oil on paper; but this is a finished portrait with no apparent use of chalk or wash.

<sup>386</sup> Bellori, 1672: 247.

said that those red hints of chalk create the illusion of broken capillaries. Lastly, Rubens added white, making the skin shiny. The impasto volumes provide the flesh with palpability, three-dimensionality and a nice play of light reflections, while they also bear witness to the quickness of the brush. More practical reasons are served by the brown, short lines, which delineate the shape of the face, define shadows and prepare for the transference of the design to canvas.

The vitality of the skin is further expressed through the intense pink of the lips and the liveliness of the eyes. In the inner corner of Mayerne's right eye, the chalk contributes to the accentuation of a very warm and intimate gaze and brilliantly corresponds to the oily, pink touches of the outer corner and lid. Underneath the eye the more greyish nuance and the impasto create the illusion of slightly dark circles and eye bags, which reflect more the impression of a mature and insightful, rather than tired, look. The highlight in the glance of the pupils foregrounds the eyes as the focal point of the body, transmitting intellectual power. Besides the pupils, the white short line in Mayerne's lower right eyelid, in a similar way to Rubens' 1623 self-portrait, adds the appearance of moisture and enlivens the face, while some pink tints in the white of the eyes further vivify the look and indicate the presence of nerves. The slightly different level of his eyebrows and the absorbed look to his right suggest that Mayerne is captured in a spontaneous moment of thoughtfulness.

As appropriate for an intellectual sitter, the forehead is painted with special attention in a range of white, ochre and grey (to the left part of his forehead), and highlighted with a white glaze on the right to accentuate his mental capacities.<sup>387</sup> The white, impasto strokes over his eyebrows illuminate the forehead and the eyes, and provide colouristic guidance to

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<sup>387</sup> See here ch. 2: 119-20; Bomford, 2000: 74.



be followed in the Carolina portrait. His beard receives extra care. It is painted in a range of white, ochre and grey for which some blues of extraordinary quality must have been used. These delicate touches can be noticed at the edges of Mayerne's beard in the drawing, but not in the Carolina portrait. This might suggest Rubens' colour experimentation during his stay in England. The presence of the pigment on the left, over Mayerne's head, and some touches on his hair, further support this thought. Given Mayerne's interest in artistic materials and the fact that in this same period Rubens commented on Mayerne's manuscript on the arts, we might ask whether a discussion took place regarding this pigment and a general experimentation with the blues. Perhaps the painter wished to show to Mayerne how this pigment behaved. Most probably, this is the same pigment which gives the greyish nuance to the hair of Thomas Howard and the colours of his blue ribbon in Rubens' portrait of the same period (c. 1629-30, National Gallery, London; fig. 42).

In any case, the blue paint in combination with the meticulous study of Mayerne's physiological constitution suggest that discussion and experimentation took place either during the execution of the portrait and/or at some other point during Rubens' stay in London. The extensive use of oils and chalk in combination with the medium of paper accords the Mayerne drawing a category of its own among Rubens' sketches. The use of chalk and the high degree of finish suggest the proximity and pleasant intercourse between the two men. Despite the familiarity and informality, the sketch dispenses with roughness. Indeed, this is a sketch of very good quality and great detail. The Mayerne drawing cannot be merely perceived as a preparatory drawing and a *ricordo*. The richness of the technique and the assiduous rendering of the materials argue that this is a forum of communication

between the physician and the painter which integrates the interaction between sitter and artist, the exchange of knowledge, and finally support their *bonne heures*. The sketch embodies in its kernel the early modern discourse on civil conversation, shared values, the honourable occupations of virtuous men, and their sharing of knowledge and help.

### The Mayerne manuscript: intellectual exchange and painterly advice

The Mayerne manuscript with Rubens' textual contribution is explored here as a piece of recorded conversation that further evidences the communication between the two men. Mayerne's manuscript, as we will see, shows that familiarity and sharing among friends are similarly conveyed through written speech. Moreover, we will find that Rubens' text suggests that the manuscript is an informal document which reflects the conversational tone between friends. Before investigating Rubens' contribution, however, it is of crucial importance to reconstruct the wider context of the manuscript. After exploring its structure, purposes, methodology and sources, the manuscript's extracts which are associated with Rubens' name will be examined.

Mayerne's popular manuscript is today in the British Library, catalogued as Sloane 2052, and titled as *Pictoria, Sculptoria, et quae subalternarum artium spectantia in lingua Latina, Gallica, Italica, Germanica, conscripta a Petro Paulo Rubens, Van Dyke, Somers, Greenberry, Janson, etc.* Mayerne, in his own handwriting, ornamentally entitled it *Pictoria Sculptoria & quae subalternarum artium 1620*, signed his name "T. de Mayerne", and added his Greek motto "Σὺν τῷ θεῷ" ("with the [help of] God") very elaborately. From the early nineteenth century onwards, the manuscript has received ongoing attention

for the insights it gives into the technology of the arts, with art historians extensively using this source for its valuable information on painting techniques, and artists attempting to revive the “secrets” of the old masters.<sup>388</sup> The manuscript, which has been translated into German, Dutch and English, was recently even described as “a bible for the study of Baroque painting technique”.<sup>389</sup>

It is of great interest that Mayerne did not limit his sources to books. The largest part of the information was gathered through his communication with living artists, artisans, and even apothecaries. His sources thus range from the very famous artists of the period – such as Rubens, Van Dyck, John Hoskins, Artemisia Gentileschi, Mytens, Somers, Greenbury, Janson – to unknown workers of “humble” rank, among them engravers, miniaturists, clock-makers, goldsmiths, and cabinet-makers of English, French, Flemish or Dutch extraction. This variety illuminates two interesting, but largely overlooked, points. First, it suggests Mayerne’s affability in social affairs. Second, it also shows that the manuscript is a collaborative product of a community of people bonded through this written source. The exploration of this social network can contribute to wider questions within early modern manuscript studies and particularly shed light on authorship and sociability.<sup>390</sup> In this respect, Rubens’ interaction with Mayerne can be viewed as a first step towards addressing that social network by focusing on the manuscript as “a mode of

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<sup>388</sup> For the origins and history of the manuscript, see Trevor-Roper, 1993. For the first publication of several extracts, see Eastlake, 1847. For a chemical approach, see Mayerne, 1970; for painters’ interest in the manuscript, see Anquetin, 1924 and 1970; Maroger, 1948; Redelius, 2009.

<sup>389</sup> Qt. van Hout and Balis, 2012: 54; For the German translation, see Berger, 1901; for the Dutch translation and a focus more on oil painting, see van de Graaf, 1958; for the English translation and the suggestion of a new painting recipe based on the manuscript, see Mayerne (with Fels’ contributions), 2001.

<sup>390</sup> See e.g. Love, 1993; Marotti, 1995; Ezell, 1999; Scott-Warren, 2000; Crick and Walsham (eds), 2004; Brayman Hackel, 2005; Sherman, 2007; Trolander and Tenger, 2007; for further bibliography, see Tenger and Trolander, 2010.

social bonding”.<sup>391</sup> Additionally, it can be seen as a tangible form of the *civil conversazione*, exemplifying Guazzo’s emphasis on conversation as a tool for learning and the advancement of knowledge.

The rich sources result in quite a big manuscript, consisting of one hundred and seventy folios with most of them written on both recto and verso. The paper is of variable quality, size, thickness and colour (from light beige to more brown). The character of letters and the language also varies, showing that besides Mayerne, either his amanuenses or the person who contributed the information put down the notes. Nevertheless, not all of the manuscript presents the above characteristics. We need to make a distinction between two different parts of the manuscript, a distinction which is of crucial significance to the interpretation of Rubens’ quotations. The first part, from the beginning up until folio 23<sup>r</sup>, is more polished, in Mayerne’s handwriting, with the same paper, and consistently in French. The second, much bigger part runs into rushed and disorderly notes with marginal comments, corrections in red ink, and some notes crossed out, and is composed of various hands, paper and languages.

The huge differences between the two sections strongly suggest that Mayerne’s intention was to incorporate the disorderly notes of the second into the first part and publish the whole.<sup>392</sup> This is indicated by the insertion of some notes into the polished portion of the text. It is also significant that in his notes the names of Mayerne’s sources appear over the advice they contributed, usually in the title, with the whole extract underneath referring to their personal advice. In the polished part, recommendations and

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<sup>391</sup> This will be explored as regards the compilation of the manuscript, and not the circulation which Harold Love has highlighted; Love, 1993: 146, 190, 209.

<sup>392</sup> Trevor-Roper, 1993: 279.

names have been inserted into Mayerne's personal voice and argument. Yet he is very careful in naming his sources, such as in Rubens' case, as will be shown later.

Mayerne's desire to publish his material becomes evident in a letter from 1630, in which he maintains: "it is high time for me to take up my pen if I wish to leave to posterity some of my dearest children – that is, the fruits of my genius – as my conscience dictates, and my friends invite me."<sup>393</sup> It is not clear whether this quotation refers to his manuscript on the arts or the corpus of his writings, but it explicitly indicates that Mayerne considered his textual work as the "children" born of his genius, with the material functioning as a channel of communication between him and his friends. Hence, we may assume with some certainty that the purpose of Mayerne's written corpus was not commercial, given that the materials used for the experiments must have been more expensive than the monetary gain of publication. Mayerne's motivation to include the arts among his "children" has been explained by Hugh Trevor-Roper as indicating his "real thirst for knowledge and a desire to leave a record of the chemical discoveries".<sup>394</sup> To this I would add his fervour to reveal and share with his friends the mechanism of the microcosm, as I will argue in the next section.

What makes the manuscript particularly engaging is Mayerne's novel methodology, which grasps a systematic, medical point of view similar to that which informs his *Ephemerides*.<sup>395</sup> In his latter text, he defines *autopsia* as an investigative process of seeing with his own eyes, working in his laboratory, cooking, mingling and cross-examining

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<sup>393</sup> MS Sloane 2069: fol. 172; Trevor-Roper, 1993: 281-82.

<sup>394</sup> Trevor-Roper, 1993: 281.

<sup>395</sup> Nance, 2001: esp. ch. 2. In these notebooks Mayerne keeps scrupulous descriptions of the state of the patient's body, the temperament, the historical background of diseases, any special peculiarity, as well as potential cures and appropriate drugs and prescriptions. His notes then could be repeatedly consulted to refresh his memory regarding either the history of the patient or the case of a particular disease.

textual recommendations and anatomising artistic practices – a process which surely slowed down the publication process. After observation and experimentation, Mayerne comes up with his comments, which he inserts in the margins in red ink: “Vidi”, “Fecit”, “optimum”, “falsum est”, etc., along with the necessary credits to the appropriate person.<sup>396</sup> Additionally, Mayerne identifies “don’t do recipes” to help future researchers avoid useless repetition.<sup>397</sup>

One might wonder what sort of skills helped Mayerne to extract his friends’ “secrets”. His sociability, agreeable character, skills in rhetoric and eloquence, in combination with his high status may have aided the eliciting of “grand secrets”.<sup>398</sup> Many contributors of “secrets” were also his patients. For example, the court painter to James I and Queen Anne, Paul van Somer, and an artisan called Bouffault were among these who revealed to Mayerne the secrets of their art on their deathbeds.<sup>399</sup> The case of the painter and miniaturist John Hoskins might be similar to that of Rubens. Hoskins, who was also a patient of Mayerne’s, explained some of his secrets while painting the physician’s portrait.<sup>400</sup> This does not mean that the physician always used healing as a context for extracting his patients’ practices. However, he was certainly always eager and ready to pursue new knowledge.

It is not known whether Rubens had ever been Mayerne’s patient. His name does not appear in Mayerne’s *consilia*. However, not all of Mayerne’s patients are recorded on

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<sup>396</sup> Commenting on and evaluating recipes and recommendations from other people reflects similar concerns about trust expressed in early modern medical and cookery recipes. See Leong and Pennell, 2007.

<sup>397</sup> MS Sloane 2083: fol. 84-85; qt. after Trevor-Roper, 1993: 280. For “don’t do” recipes, see, for example, Sloane 2052: 7<sup>r</sup>, 10<sup>v</sup>; Mayerne, 2001: 152, 155.

<sup>398</sup> For the “grand secret” of Jean Petitot, see e.g. Sloane 2052: 9<sup>v</sup>; Berger, 1901: 114. For the rhetoric skills of the early modern physician, see Pender and Struever (eds), 2012.

<sup>399</sup> MS Sloane, 2066: fol. 155; Sloane, 2052: fol. 31.

<sup>400</sup> MS Sloane 2048: fol. 42; MS Sloane 1978: fol. 54; 2052: fol. 29, 77, 149; qt. after Trevor-Roper, 1993: 271-72.

paper, because some wished to remain anonymous. Nevertheless, we may be justified in assuming that after an intense period of suffering from gout in 1629, Rubens did avail himself of the opportunity to consult the famous Mayerne, who was an expert in arthritic disease.<sup>401</sup> Mayerne's letter proves that he was aware of Rubens' disease.<sup>402</sup> Like Hoskins, Rubens probably gave his recommendations to Mayerne while portraying the physician in the British Museum sketch, as argued above. Mayerne, from the position of the sitter, would have tried to gain access to Rubens' technique through chatting as well as observing the painter's hands.

Rubens' contribution to MS Sloane 2052 is on folio 150<sup>r</sup>, in black ink under the title in red "Il Cavaliero Pietro Paulo Rubens". It does not constitute annotations in the sense of providing extra comments or a further explanation attached to the text, but they constitute the main text as seen in figure 43. The fact that the text appears in Italian, the language of the personal contact between the physician and the artist, supports the informal tone of their conversation. Spontaneity is also indicated by the crossing out of a few words in the first paragraph and by the annotation in the margin in red ink, which offers further explanation. This informality is indicative of the second part of the manuscript with the various languages and spontaneous writing styles clearly arguing for the conversational tone of the document. Mayerne, however, intended to turn his material into his native French, as is suggested by the first, refined part of the manuscript.

The content and structure of the extracts with Rubens' name clearly demonstrate the warmth of the conversation between Mayerne and Rubens and the informality of the

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<sup>401</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 181 to Gevaerts (29 December 1628): 294; see also 285.

<sup>402</sup> Add. MS 20921: fol. 9<sup>v</sup>-10<sup>r</sup>; Bouvier, 1937: 202 ("vous et moy ayons soin de notre santé: gardons nous de la goute").

document. As will be shown, it is important to bear in mind this informality of the written speech when asking the meaning and purpose of the extracts. As part of attempts to reconstruct Rubens' painting process, the quotations by Rubens-Mayerne have been considerably misread, paraphrased and even recreated, especially by artists. For instance, in 1957 A. E. A. Werner revealed Jacques Maroger's inconsistencies in quoting Mayerne on Rubens' technique.<sup>403</sup> Werner demonstrated that Maroger falsely linked quotations with the name of Mayerne. More recently, Franklin Redelius, Maroger's pupil, in his own attempt to revive recipes and also suggest new ones, often distorts Mayerne's manuscript in such a way as to support his own arguments about painting techniques. In Redelius' text Mayerne's annotations are often misinterpreted as "Rubens' own words".<sup>404</sup>

It is my opinion that the texts with Rubens' name are extracts from what was most likely a larger, oral conversation, and as such they represent what Mayerne and/or Rubens considered was necessary to record on paper. Significantly, not all the comments come from Rubens' mouth; those in the first section are Mayerne's words, attributed to Rubens in the margin via annotations.<sup>405</sup> In these cases it is wrong to quote such comments as "Rubens said", "his own words", etc., as has been frequently done in the current literature. Rubens' recommendations regarding the oils, varnishes and blues reflect a wider concern with them as registered in the manuscript. The two most frequently cited passages are:

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<sup>403</sup> Werner, 1957.

<sup>404</sup> Redelius, 2009: 98.

<sup>405</sup> Mayerne's scientific methodology and his habit of always attributing his sources, of course excludes any sort of charlatanism – namely, adding Rubens' name for reasons of authority without there being any link between the painter and the text.



Il Signor Cavaliere Rubens a detto che bisogna che tutti i colorj siano presto macinati operando con acqua di raggia (I. cum oleo extracto ex bice molli & alba quae colligitur ex arbore picea, est boni odoris, & distillatur in Aqua instar Olej albi Therebentinae) che é migliore e non tanta fiera come l'oglio di spica. [folio 150<sup>f</sup>]

(The Signor Cavaliere Rubens said that it was necessary to grind all paints quickly and process them with aqua di raggia (that is, oil like light [clear] oil of turpentine which is produced by distilling with water the soft and white resin which is collected from pines and is pleasant smelling), which is better than and not as shining as spikenard oil.)<sup>406</sup>

N.B. Pour faire que vos couleurs s'entendent facilement, & par consequent se meslent bien, & mesmes ne meurent pas, comme pour les azurs: mais generalement en toutes couleurs, en peignant trempez legerement de fois a aultre votre pinceau dans de l'huile blanche de Therebentine de Venise extraitte au baing M[arie] puis avec ledict pinceaumeslez vos couleurs sur la palette. [marginal note: "M. Rubens" / "Vidi"] [folio 9<sup>v</sup>]

(So that your paints can be easily spread and as a consequence mix well and do not discolor, as with azure but also as with all other paints, lightly dip your brush now and then into light [clear] Venetian oil of turpentine that has been extracted in a water bath and with the same brush mix the paints on the palette.)<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Sloane 2052: fol. 150<sup>f</sup>; trans. after Mayerne, 2001: 258.

<sup>407</sup> Sloane 2052: fol. 9<sup>v</sup>; trans. after Mayerne, 2001: 45; Berger, 1901: 114.

As can be seen, these two quotations are in Italian-Latin and French. The structure of Sloane 2052 is very helpful in locating Rubens' own voice, because the Italian-Latin commentary, attributed to Rubens, belongs to the second incohesive part of the manuscript. The French quotation, by contrast, comes from the first, polished part, in Mayerne's handwriting and paraphrasing Rubens. This means that besides folio 150<sup>r</sup>, the commentaries in French were written by Mayerne at some other later point. The date of the title-page, "1620", shows that Mayerne started the compilation of his material that year, but it is unlikely that he began with the part that appears first in Sloane 2052. Besides this, it is extremely unlikely that Mayerne would have met Rubens prior to 1629. It is also important to note that on folio 150<sup>r</sup> with the Italian text, Rubens' name appears in the title. On the other hand, in Mayerne's polished text this is never in the title, as it appears in the translations of the manuscript in German and English.<sup>408</sup> In Mayerne's manuscript, regarding folios 7<sup>v</sup> and 9<sup>v</sup>, Rubens' name is always at the margin, as an annotation to Mayerne's paraphrasis. Therefore, it should be kept in mind that the quotation from folio 9<sup>v</sup> was written by Mayerne at a later date, while the passage on folio 150<sup>r</sup> is most probably Rubens' own words, which he dictated. The authenticity of these words is emphasised by the verb "a detto" ("said"), meaning that the text records Rubens' speech. Additionally, a sort of practical illustration must have provided further material for Mayerne's paraphrasis. This is strongly supported by the word "Vidi" at the margin of folio 9<sup>v</sup>, which testifies that Mayerne had seen it with his own eyes.

Regarding the content of these two quotations, they both clearly indicate Rubens' preference for oil of turpentine ("acqua di ragia" / "l' huile blanche de Therebentine de

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<sup>408</sup> Berger, 1901; Mayerne (with Fels' contributions), 2001. In the second case, Rubens' name appears in brackets, but is still misleading as it falsely suggests that the text constitutes Rubens' own words.

Venise”) extracted through distillation (“distillatur in Aqua” / “extraite au baing M[arie]”) mainly from pine resin (“ex bice molli & alba quae colligitur ex arbore picea”), rather than for oil of spikenard (“l’oglio di spica”). “Acqua di ragia” is best understood as a synonym for oil of turpentine. It is a distilled oil traditionally used as a solvent for oil paint, which is defined in Tommaseo-Bellini’s *Dizionario* as “olio essenziale distillato dalle varie specie delle ragie o resine di pino” (“essential oil distilled from the various species of turpentine or pine resin”).<sup>409</sup> For the obvious purposes of clarification, on folio 150<sup>r</sup> a more descriptive interpretation has replaced the crossed out words “albo Therebentinae”. Why the “clear turpentine” is explained in Latin, instead of Italian, raises some questions. The simple answer may be that Latin was perceived as being more appropriate for those unfamiliar with Italian.<sup>410</sup> The comment in red ink in the margin of folio 9<sup>v</sup>, “acqua di ragia”, suggests that it may have been used interchangeably by Mayerne for the “huile blanche de Therebentine de Venise”.<sup>411</sup>

It is well-known that oil of turpentine has not sufficient binding power. Having undergone distillation, it is a liquid which has been traditionally used as a solvent. Thereby, oil of turpentine, whose use Rubens advised, is not sufficient to bind pigments. They should firstly have been ground with a drying oil, such as linseed oil. After that, the paints should then be ground with the solvent. Joyce Plesters also argued for this

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<sup>409</sup> ‘Il Dizionario della Lingua Italiana di Niccolò Tommaseo’ (1865), “acqua di ragia”, <http://www.dizionario.org/d/?pageurl=acqua-di-ragia> (accessed 13 June 2014).

<sup>410</sup> While Mayerne, 2001 translates the word “albo” as light, I would prefer to follow Eastlake and Talley’s translations as “clear”, which better shows that turpentine has undergone a distillation process; Talley, 1981: 106.

<sup>411</sup> While Kirby (1999: 32-33) believes that the manuscript over-emphasises Venice turpentine with its expensive price to make it less accessible to the painters, retailing studies of early modern England show that it was not necessarily imported from Venice, but mainly from France and Germany (which explains “its synonym of Augsburg turpentine”). Cox and Dannehl, 2007: 118; for the synonym the authors quote Dictionary Project: Houghton 3/035/414a.

The frequent use of turpentine in Rubens’ works has been asserted by van Hout and Balis (2012: 55), who point to the paint drips in some of Rubens’ paintings as an indication of the use of turpentine in his binders.

interpretation of the process regarding the folio 150<sup>r</sup> extract.<sup>412</sup> Furthermore, Ernst Berger, who translated the manuscript into German, states: “With Rubens yet another oil or varnish additive must be assumed as probable.”<sup>413</sup> The use of the extracts as a means to reconstruct Rubens’ painting process is illustrated by Donald Fels’ approach. Fels builds on this material of Mayerne’s to support his view that Rubens “first having mixed his dry pigments with a co-polymerized drying oil after having ground them in spirits of turpentine...then dipp[ed] his brush into an essential oil varnish”.<sup>414</sup> Understanding the quotations as an aid to reconstructing Rubens’ technique and even to suggest new painting methods is therefore possible. However, the emphasis in current literature on the “unsaid” rather than the “said”, on what has been left out rather than the part of the process described, blurs this intellectual exchange between the two friends. It ignores the informality and spontaneity of friendly conversation, and all the subtextual evidence we can glean from the manuscript. One might then ask: did Rubens wish to hide or to share information?

In my view, there is no question that the extracts aimed at communicating knowledge. However, this becomes clearer when the passages are recognised not as describing a process but as just a short piece of practical advice. They are merely a handful of painterly tips or guidance arising out of an oral discussion. So, the advice given is incomplete taken out of the original context. Rubens may have ground his paints with more additives and also processed them with some varnish, but this does not constitute part of the advice given. As regards folio 150<sup>r</sup>, it is clear that Rubens communicated here to an insider, such

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<sup>412</sup> Plesters, 1983: 41.

<sup>413</sup> Berger, 1901: no. 328; trans. after Mayerne, 2001: 46.

<sup>414</sup> Mayerne, 2001: 123.

as Mayerne. Alternatively, Mayerne recorded only snippets or selected bits about Rubens' preference for turpentine over spikenard oil and the significance of quick grinding. Grinding quickly could prevent the colours from cracking through the early evaporation of the turpentine distillate when exposed to the air.<sup>415</sup> This does not exclude the possibility, however, that before grinding the paints with "acqua di ragia", Rubens undertook some other process. To this should be added the primary preparation of the pigments according to the individual behaviour and properties of each pigment. It may also be considered that Rubens' "operando" may conceal a repetitive use of turpentine, not only in the grinding of colours, but also in later stages and layers; or, as Mayerne would say, a "now and then" use.

Similarly, folio 9<sup>v</sup> keeps the character of an informal, abbreviated and quick recommendation, which reflects the conversational tone of folio 150<sup>r</sup>. A proper contextualisation makes this clear. What has been ignored by current commentaries on the manuscript is that the quotation appears under the title: "If a second paint is laid upon the first, etc. Spoilage of paints. Addition of spikenard oil and turpentine." In this section Mayerne gives advice on the spoilage of colours with particular reference to the problem created by successive layers of paint. At the end he notes "N.B.", meaning "note well" ("nota bene"), adding the quotation as an extra, important tip and at the margin in red ink "Rubens", "Aqua di ragia" and "Vidi". Thus, in my opinion, this is again a key manifestation of the oral conversation which generated it, and not a description of the process. Oil of turpentine is good at preventing discolouration and helping successive layers of colours to spread easily. It was probably meant to be used "now and then" as a

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<sup>415</sup> Plesters, 1983: 41; Redelius, 2009: 66-67.

diluent of the paints according to their behaviour and the painter's judgment. The passage does not show the preparation of colours or exclude the use of drying oil or varnish. Fels has highlighted the problems this advice has created for painters who have attempted to dip their brush into a solution of turpentine spirits alone: "The scent alone of pure spirits of turpentine on the brush can cause a paint layer to run."<sup>416</sup>

Returning to folio 150<sup>r</sup>, it contains a further point which supports my argument for seeing informality in the way the commentary was recorded. A loose textual structure with a recommendation on making beautiful smalt and working with blues follows the extract on the use of "acqua di ragia":

Per far la smalta bella e chiara, bisogna temperarla con vernice tosto, & metter la piano & non affaticarsi, a mescolar troppo mentre il colore é humido, per che questa agittatione quasta il colore: Ma essendo il lauoro secco si puo lauorar di sopra come vi piace.

Cosi se puo far con le cenere. Cendre d' Azur. L' ultramarino & le cenere di ultramarino sone bellissime per finire la lontananza.

(To make smalt beautiful and bright it is necessary to mix it quickly with varnish, to apply it thinly and not laboriously, not to mix the paints in a wet condition too much, because this movement spoils the colors. But if the work is dry, one may work on it as one pleases.

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<sup>416</sup> Mayerne, 2001: 45.

One can proceed with ash blue cendre d' azure. Ultramarine & the ashes of ultramarine are beautiful for finishing the far distances.)<sup>417</sup>

Rubens' recommendation on blues is clear enough. Indeed, it is a property of smalt that, when ground too fine, it becomes pale. Smalt must be mixed quickly, because of its "powerful siccative effect" (smalt dries quickly, especially when used in oil medium).<sup>418</sup> It seems that the discolouration of smalt and blue ashes was a common concern for artists and is often raised in Mayerne's manuscript.<sup>419</sup> It is highly likely that Mayerne had Rubens' advice in mind from folio 150<sup>f</sup> when he added to his folio 9<sup>v</sup> quotation, related to Rubens and "aqua di ragia", the reference to the discolouration of "les azurs", also thus revealing the broader anxiety of artisans about the discolouration of blue pigments.<sup>420</sup>

Rubens' name is noted one more time: in red ink in the margin of folio 7<sup>v</sup> of the polished part of the manuscript, next to a varnish recipe.<sup>421</sup> Given that varnishes were under experimentation, the reference shows that Rubens discussed with Mayerne issues of crucial value for the advancement of technology, such as the improvement of diluents,

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<sup>417</sup> Sloane 2052: 150<sup>f</sup>; trans. after Mayerne, 2001: 258; Berger, 1901: no. 328.

<sup>418</sup> Mühlethaler and Thissen, 1993: 115-16; van Hout and Balis, 2012: 119. Research has identified smalt in Rubens' paintings, such as *The Apocalyptic Wife* (c. 1624-25), *Meleager and Atlanta* (c. 1635) and *Descent from the Cross* (c. 1612-14, Cathedral of Our Lady, Antwerp); see Mühlethaler and Thissen, 1993: 124, 127.

<sup>419</sup> See e.g. Abraham Latombé's concern about the discolouration of blues, Sloane 2052: 11<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>420</sup> "N.B. Smalt discolors easily, and even if it appears beautiful and feels very fine when bought, no judgment can be made until it is mixed with oil and white lead and allowed to dry; only then can it be seen whether it will become darker. The usual commercial smalt darkens and fades." Sloane 2052: 9<sup>v</sup>; trans. after Mayerne, 2001: 154.

<sup>421</sup> Sloane 2052, 7<sup>v</sup>; "La therebentine, avec les temps se seiche, l' huile [de] Therebentine ou le petrole s' esuanouissant, & ne pe[ult] endurer l' eau. Le meilleur vernix resistant a l' [?eau] se fait avec l'huile siccative, fort epaissie au soleil sur la lytharge (voyés sur la ceruse) sans aulcunement bouillir" ("The turpentine [balm] dries with time, oil of turpentine and naphtha evaporate and cannot tolerate water. The best varnish that is water [? air] resistant is made from desiccating oil thicken in the sun over lead monoxide (compare also over white lead), without any boiling"). Berger, 1901: 108; trans. after Mayerne, 2001: 151.

varnishes and blue pigments.<sup>422</sup> Mayerne never finished his manuscript, so it is not known if any other recipe by Rubens found its way in. Interestingly, Mayerne's commentaries show that his information on Rubens' technique was not restricted to folio 150<sup>r</sup>. The varnish recipe, for example, does not find any parallel, which presumably shows its transfer via oral communication. Also, the word "vidi" in folio 9<sup>v</sup> indicates, as suggested above, that Mayerne had seen with his own eyes a sort of performance by Rubens. Had Mayerne visited Rubens once in his studio? Did Rubens show Mayerne how he worked with the blues in *Peace and War* (1629-30, The National Gallery, London) or *A Landscape with St George and the Dragon* (1629-30, The Royal Collection, London)?<sup>423</sup> At least Mayerne would have observed Rubens during the painterly process of the *ricordo* sketch for the Carolina portrait.

Reconsidering this sketch in light of the above discussion, a better understanding of the conversation between the two men can be achieved. Mayerne indeed could have seen with his own eyes Rubens working with chalk and oil, grinding his pigments, dipping his brush into his diluent now and then, and mixing the paints on the palette. Whether oil of turpentine or not, the diluent is the medium that, after proper handling, supplies body to the layers of pigment. As Ulrich Heinen has observed, these layers can vary from very thick to very thin and translucent.<sup>424</sup> Furthermore, as discussed earlier, in the sketch the blue pigment above Mayerne's head and beard could relate to the anxiety about the blues evidenced by the manuscript.

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<sup>422</sup> Van Hout and Balis, 2012: 126.

<sup>423</sup> For the identification of azurite and ultramarine in *The Peace and War*, see Roy, 1999: 89-95; esp. 93-95.

<sup>424</sup> Heinen, 2001: 81.



The sketch and the manuscript correspond in informality and suggest the familiarity between Mayerne and Rubens. They also indicate sharing, which was perceived as a fundamental element of early modern friendship. Mayerne most likely refers to this in his letter by writing “faveurs particulières”. My analysis of the sketch and the manuscript as products of an interactive process of conversation and exchange, and as embodying both Rubens’ and Mayerne’s identities supports the contention that sociability and friendship should be seriously reconsidered as constitutive of, and also integral to, various historical sources.

### Communicating medical identity through oil painting

The Carolina portrait, by contrast, dispenses with the spontaneity of the sketch and manuscript (figs 24-26). The canvas embraces the formality and timelessness appropriate for the portrait of an “exemplary” figure of Mayerne’s rank. This is not to say that the image does not register the communication, and the social and intellectual encounter that took place between the two friends. On the contrary, my analysis will show that the canvas encapsulates Rubens’ and Mayerne’s conversation and “bonnes heures”. It demonstrates the sublimation of Mayerne to a man of physical and spiritual vigour and the insightful rendering of his medical profession and the personal elements of his medical identity. This point also contributes a novel approach to the studies of physicians’ portraits, which have engaged more closely with “how a related self of occupations was depicted”, rather than with the individual identity of a physician.<sup>425</sup> Finally, it will be suggested that the figure of

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<sup>425</sup> Jordanova, 2000: qt. 13; 2008-2009; 2010.

Mayerne can be perceived as the embodiment of the interaction and virtues of both sitter and painter and the creative aspect of their conversation.

Mayerne recognises the sublimation of his physical likeness when he enthusiastically writes to Rubens that the work surpasses by far the subject matter: “J’ay recue vostre excellent tableau auquel véritablement l’ouvrage surpasse de bien loing la matière et n’y a rien qui mérite le regarder que le labour exquis que vous y avez mis” (“I received your excellent canvas, in which the work truly surpasses by far its subject matter, and there is nothing that deserves your exquisite work”).<sup>426</sup> The physician attributes the excellence of the canvas to Rubens’ nobility and virtue, the harmony between his spirit and hand, immortal grace and his incomparable brush-work. Such is Mayerne’s satisfaction that he admits that if he did not know himself, he would feel vain: “Si je ne me cognoissois moy mesme, je serois en danger de me picquer d’un peu de vaine gloire, mais non pas jusques là que de croire que les ornements d’un Aesculape et d’un Phare invitant les vaisseaux de gagner un port assuré, fussent deubs à mon portrait” (“If I did not know myself, I would be in danger of feeling a little vanity, though not to the point of believing that the ornaments of an Aesculapius and a beacon inviting ships to reach a safe harbor were proper for my portrait”).<sup>427</sup> Owing to the iconographic motifs which Mayerne mentions, there is consensus in the literature that the portrait being discussed is the one at the North Carolina Museum of Art.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Add. MS 20921: fol 9<sup>v</sup>-10<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.; trans. Rupert Martin, 1986: 10.

<sup>428</sup> The literature on this portrait is very short; see Huemer, 1977: no. 47, 178-80. Also, Heinen, 2001: 81. For a more general presentation of the iconography of Mayerne, see Gibson, 1941; and Trevor-Roper, 2006: appendix B, 370-71

Indeed, in the Carolina portrait, Mayerne has on his left the sculpture of the ancient Greek god of medicine Aesculapius, while on his right, outside the window, the light of a lantern can be seen. I will shortly return to these attributes of the medical profession after interpreting the bodily constitution of Mayerne. Typically for humanists, Mayerne is represented as seated comfortably in his chair in a three-quarter length similar to Rubens' portraits of his Antwerpian friends, the physician Ludovicus Nonnius (fig. 15) and the humanist Jan Gaspar Gevartius (c. 1628, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp).<sup>429</sup> His body is slightly turned to his left and his head to the right. This creates the illusion of three-dimensionality and supplies depth to the image. He is dressed in a formal black gown and white shirt, with his black cloak draped nonchalantly over his left shoulder. Additionally, he holds a dark wide-trimmed hat. His rich and sober apparel indicates his high social and professional status as the chief physician to the English court. Yet, this sense of superiority is mitigated by an air of simplicity and modesty.

Only his sparkling eyes create the illusion of movement and animate the communication between sitter, painter and spectator. His eyes convey alertness, intellectual vigilance and the innate fire which was appropriate not only for a physician of his rank, but also for a man intensely active in the body politic. Eyes and head are highlighted, thus visualising the vibrant function of the sitter's animal faculty, and therefore his intellectual capacities and mental creativity.<sup>430</sup> The extra care that Mayerne's face received is denoted also by the fact that infrared reflectography has shown that after the rest of the painting was done, a gap was left for Mayerne's head. This suggests that

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<sup>429</sup> For these two portraits, see Bomford, 2000: for the scholarly format, esp. 56.

<sup>430</sup> For a detailed discussion, see here ch. 2: 119-21.

Rubens most probably kept that part of the canvas to be painted by himself, while the rest was executed by his assistants.<sup>431</sup>

The importance of mind and reason is expressed in a *consilium* to the Earl of Salisbury, Robert Cecil, in which among other recommendations, Mayerne advises Cecil to rest his brain in order to achieve “tranquility”. This was necessary for the “great affairs and the safety of the state, which needs your firm hand on the tiller.”<sup>432</sup> Mayerne by linking brain and hand, theory/judgment and practice, pinpointed the necessity for Cecil to remove the bad humours in his mind for the good not only of his personal life, but also of the body politic. This further suggests that the person who engages in state affairs has the responsibility to keep himself healthy for the sake of the public good. To persuade him, Mayerne wrote: “The movements of the mind are in the power of Reason. He who commands Reason, and is ruled by it, may follow it even against the decrees of Nature.”<sup>433</sup>

Mayerne ought to be healthy, then, as an agent of the public good as well as a physician. According to Hippocrates, “the dignity of a physician requires that he should look healthy, and as plump as nature intended him to be; for the common crowd consider those who are not of excellent bodily condition to be unable to take care of others”.<sup>434</sup> But was Mayerne indeed a man of excellent bodily condition, and to what degree is the portrait his physical visual construction? While the emphasis on the head, eyes and the illuminated forehead, with its glazes of ochre tones, highlight the reasoning capacity, his corpulence might imply an unhealthy constitution. The physician’s obesity is well documented by

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<sup>431</sup> Examination report of *Dr. Theodore Mayerne*, North Carolina Museum, August 2008.

<sup>432</sup> MS Sloane 2063: fol. 87-99; qt. after Trevor-Roper, 2006: 168-69.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>434</sup> Hippocrates, trans. Jones, 1959, (6vols) II: 311.

contemporary testimonies and Mayerne's own words from the last decade of his life indicate that movement had become difficult.<sup>435</sup>

Corpulence was often perceived as indicating a humoral imbalance and as being caused by overindulgence in eating and drinking. Ironically, in 1617 Mayerne had warned his patient Endymion Porter of the "misery of court life" by advising that if Porter indulged freely in "aulicorum more" ("the customs of the courtiers") – namely eating, sleeping, walking and moving – then "vana erunt remedia atque irritus labor" ("remedies will be vain and the labour useless").<sup>436</sup> The ideal courtier, Nicolas Faret emphasises, must have a well-formed body, not too thin and not too fat.<sup>437</sup> Rubens was not only aware of the implications of fleshiness, but (as discussed in chapter 1) in his *De Imitatione Statuarum* he criticised the "many paunch-bellies, weak and pitiful legs and arms" that he had seen resulting from excesses in eating and drinking, idleness and lack of exercise, as well as from decay and corruption.<sup>438</sup>

Moreover, corpulence could be caused or increased by an excess of phlegm, which was supposed to be a watery substance that accrued with age. Depicted at the age of fifty-seven, Mayerne would have looked at his wrinkles and white-grey hair and beard as the outcome of the third season of ageing, the autumn, as he had described them a year before.<sup>439</sup> According to Aristotle, Mayerne had already entered the third stage of life, old age. The implications of the phlegmatic temperament, such as sluggishness and laziness, were not appropriate for an intellectual man active in international politics. Thus it is not

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<sup>435</sup> Slingsby, 1836: 48, 69-70; qt. after Trevor Roper, 2006: 9-10. Furthermore, all the portraits of Mayerne suggest his corpulence, see Gibson, 1941.

<sup>436</sup> MS Sloane 2066: 38<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>437</sup> Faret, 1630: 25.

<sup>438</sup> Thielemann, forthcoming, 2015; see here ch. 1: 52-53.

<sup>439</sup> Add. MS 20921: fol. 7; qt. after Trevor-Roper, 1993: 281; Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, II, 14.

surprising that whereas Rubens could not avoid Mayerne's voluminous body, he refined it by placing it in darkness and illuminating instead Mayerne's head and intellectual abilities.

Furthermore, balance and health are enhanced by the skin texture and colouring. The thin layers of paint make the skin transparent, the highlights add the appearance of moisture and luminosity, and the reddish tones externalise the blood and its innate warmth. This is not only a sign of healthy vigour, despite the autumn of Mayerne's age, but also a manifestation of masculinity and the capacity for procreation. Men, according to the humoral theory, are considered by nature to be hotter and drier than women, who are colder and moister.<sup>440</sup> Hence, men tend to have an excess of yellow bile, while women of phlegm. Thus, the "male humours" support rationality, creativity, passion, activity and, in short, a physically, morally and intellectually stronger body. The innate fire of the male body reaches the head and while it warms the brain making a man smarter, it also burns the hair. So baldness turns finally to be a positive sign of masculinity.<sup>441</sup>

Besides Mayerne's baldness, his white beard can be also perceived as indicating wisdom. In 1638, after an invitation to return to France, the physician argued that moving and changing countries was not appropriate for him, since "n' appartient n'y a ma barbe chenu, ny au rang que je tiens dans le monde" ("it does not fit neither to my white beard, nor to the rank I hold in the world").<sup>442</sup> Mayerne's white beard is presented here as an indication of social rank and wisdom. Facial hair was traditionally seen as marking masculinity. Not only were beards not burnt by the innate fire, but, most importantly, their growth was a further indication of masculinity. This clearly differentiated men from

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<sup>440</sup> For how this medical view stereotyped gender roles as represented in early modern visuality, see Filipczak, 1997.

<sup>441</sup> Wiesner, 2000: 32.

<sup>442</sup> Add. MS 20921: fol. 75.

women, as well as from youths. In this context, as Will Fisher states, “the beard made the man”.<sup>443</sup> Additionally, as Fisher has shown, the growth of facial hair was closely linked to the production of semen and procreation.<sup>444</sup> As the Renaissance physiognomist Thomas Hill opines: “The bearde in man...begginith to appeare in the nether jawe...through the heate and moysture, carried unto the same, drawn from the genitours: which draw to them especially, the sperme from those places.”<sup>445</sup> Consequently, Mayerne’s beard can also be seen as “excrement” issuing from his innate “heate and moysture”, and as such implying his ability to procreate. He indeed mentions his active sexual life, playfully yet proudly in his letter to Rubens.<sup>446</sup> Mayerne had three children by his first wife and was to acquire five more children with his second wife.<sup>447</sup>

Yet, the male body was not only perceived as being able to generate children of flesh and blood; it could also produce spiritual children. Mayerne’s body is depicted here as robust and as able to procreate both physical and spiritual children – the latter being what he called the “fruits of my genius” and “dearest children”, which he wished to “leave to posterity” by giving them form through his pen. Rubens also used similar language when referring to his artwork as a child.<sup>448</sup> This was not uncommon. According to Vasari, Michelangelo was told by a friend that “it’s a pity you haven’t taken a wife, for you would have had many children and bequeathed to them many honourable works”.<sup>449</sup> The artist responded: “I have too much of a wife in this art...and the works I shall leave behind will

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<sup>443</sup> Fisher, 2009.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*: 174.

<sup>445</sup> Hill, 1571: 145-46; qt. after Fisher, 2009: 174.

<sup>446</sup> Add. MS 20921: fol 9<sup>v</sup>-10<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>447</sup> Scouloudi, 1940: 311-15.

<sup>448</sup> See Rubens, 1955, letter 250 to Lucas Fayd’herbe (9 May 1640): 415; “There is no hurry about the little ivory child; you now have other child-work of greater importance on hand.” For a short discussion on how Rubens visually matches physical procreation and artistic creativity, see Rosenthal, 2005: 226-32.

<sup>449</sup> Vasari, 1991 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1550), trans. Conaway Bondanella and Bondanella: 479.

be my children”.<sup>450</sup> It was not unusual for an artwork to be expected to resemble in some way its maker, as his/her physical child.<sup>451</sup> In this view, the work tangibly embodies the personality and physical likeness of the painter (as argued also in chapter 2 in relation to Rubens’ self-portraits).<sup>452</sup> The relation between artistic and physical creation was a common trope in contemporary literature.<sup>453</sup> This is addressed by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar: “the text’s author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis”.<sup>454</sup>

More recently and in relation to the early modern Netherlands and Rubens’ work, Margit Thøfner has pointed towards the close link between nursing, maternity and painting, and has persuasively argued for the equivalence of the painterly and the maternal as both processes of making people.<sup>455</sup> This is further supported by the medical interpretation of the artistic mental genesis of images, analysed in the previous chapter. It shows that such comparisons are not mere linguistic metaphors, but must be understood as ontological. Both artist and writer firstly grasp the images through their senses, and mould these images accordingly to produce new images, thoughts and ideas.<sup>456</sup>

Mary Thomas Crane argues that male pregnancy was literal and not only metaphoric.<sup>457</sup> Crane underlines the medical relationship between semen and brain: the spirit animating the brain was perceived to be the same as contained in the semen, and

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Sohm, 2007: 5, 40-46; Weststeijn, 2008: 234, esp. fn. 124.

<sup>452</sup> See ch. 2: 97-99.

<sup>453</sup> Weststeijn, 2008; 145; Rosenthal, 2005: 226-32; esp. 228-29; Regosin, 1996: 183-223; Eisaman Maus, 1993; Stanford Friedman, 1987. For the concept in relation to the bodies and creativity of female Renaissance artists, see Jacobs, 1997: 27-63. Jacobs points out the “general lack of distinction between corporeal and mental processes”; however, this is discussed more as a linguistic metaphor.

<sup>454</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, 2000 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1979): 6.

<sup>455</sup> Thøfner, forthcoming, 2015.

<sup>456</sup> Fernel, 2003 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1567): 104-105.

<sup>457</sup> Crane, 1998: 279.



therefore there was perceived resemblance between the uterus and the brain. It was believed that the sperm was descended from the head, or at least that the brain was the organ which contributed more to the substance of semen.<sup>458</sup> Also, according to Galen, the semen forms the brain.<sup>459</sup> The relation between mental creativity and physical procreation is explicitly articulated in Fernel's landmark *Physiologia*:

Quibus enim exacti sunt testes...vis illa et facultas effectrix seminis occumbit: vt licet ij aetate sint adulta atque florente, non tamen rei venereae voluptate oblectationéque teneri possint... Simul his extingui deprehenditur masculus et virilis animus, totáque viriditas et flos roboris cum testibus excinditur.

(Those whose testicles have been excised...lose that power and faculty for making semen; the result is that they are unable to engage in the pleasure of sexual intercourse, and all power of procreation is gone... At the same time the virile male mind [animus] turns out to be quenched, and their whole youthful vigor and the heyday of their strength are destroyed.)<sup>460</sup>

It is misleading therefore to see the early modern process of mental conception and image- or thought-genesis merely as a metaphor for the conception and birth of the

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<sup>458</sup> Arikha, 2007: 82. Fernel, 2003: 104-105.

<sup>459</sup> However, as the French physician Jean Fernel highlights (2003: 552-53), semen does not form the mind ["animus"], whose main part, the intellect ["mens"], is a divine gift. Galen, 1992, trans. De Lacy, Vol. 5, III: 48.

<sup>460</sup> Fernel, *ibid.*: 536-37.

embryo. In early modern scientific discourses, both processes are understood as physical and biological. Therefore, male pregnancy should be seriously reconsidered, as having been literally understood. In this light, we might view the collaborative work between friends as a spiritual product generated by the mental and spiritual union of their brain processes, each one contributing his spiritual seed to the mind of the other. These seeds grow in the human mind, as they do in the vegetative world.<sup>461</sup> This belief was enhanced by the analogy between microcosm-macrocosm, which viewed the human body as a means to approach and understand the universe. Hence, the portrait of Mayerne is much more than a physical likeness of the physician. It is the spiritual offspring of two friends, encapsulating the process of a conjoined mental and spiritual activity enhanced by social encounters and conversation. It is in this sense, that Mayerne's figure constitutes an amalgam of both sitter's and painter's physical, mental and spiritual properties, and is an embodiment of the creative aspect of *civil conversazione*.

The portrait also conveys the familiarity between the painter and the sitter. The elaboration and profound understanding of Mayerne's professional behaviour suggest that this might well have been a subject of the conversation between the painter and sitter. Mayerne's hands and lips, as well as the sculpture and lantern, construct Mayerne's individualised medical identity. His hands conform to his depiction as a healthy man, which further support his capacity to take care of others, as Hippocrates advised. Mayerne believed that the skin of the hand is the most temperate, with the soft, fat flesh indicating the moisture underneath.<sup>462</sup> In the portrait, the emphasis on the hands could also correspond to intellectuality. As Kate Bomford notices regarding a group of Rubens'

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<sup>461</sup> Horowitz, 1998: 13.

<sup>462</sup> Nance, 2001: 90.

portraits of humanist-friends, the “large and brightly illuminated hands, [with] their role in rhetorical gesture and writing, might be considered as transmitters of intellect.”<sup>463</sup> Mayerne’s hands do not gesture, but their illumination and the healthy pink colour may indicate the productive work they do and the centrality of manual work in the physician’s profession. Along with the prolific writings of Mayerne, they also express the medical praxis that Mayerne advocated. Mayerne fervently supported *autopsia* and the direct use of the hands in the examination of the patient. For Mayerne, it was not through vision, but through touching that diagnosis was achieved.<sup>464</sup>

Like Mayerne, Vesalius, as discussed in chapter 1, had criticised physicians who ignored hands-on practice as a humble occupation. His self-portrait for *De humani corporis fabrica* advertises *autopsia*. Here, Vesalius examines with his two hands the hand of a corpse (figs 44-45).<sup>465</sup> However, changes do not happen overnight, and as the profession of the painter continued to carry the *taboo* of manual labour, the same, more or less, applied to medical practitioners. Thus, Mayerne was vehemently accused by his colleagues in Paris of supporting practical engagement, *autopsia*, and personally conducting experiments, thereby degrading the noble profession of the physician.<sup>466</sup> However, Mayerne never stopped working in his laboratory, moving from alchemy to chemistry and continuously to new fields, cooking medicines in his furnace, foods, cosmetics – which fascinated English society – and even pigments and oils. He thus contributed to the arts, and was always searching for the larger truths of the macrocosm

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<sup>463</sup> Bomford, 2000: 57.

<sup>464</sup> Mayerne also encouraged engagement with his experiments in alchemy. This was an unusual stance for a physician-philosopher, and especially one at the rank of the king’s chief physician, who was supposed to give instructions to surgeons, apothecaries and physicians of lower rank.

<sup>465</sup> In the preface of *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543), Vesalius condemned physicians who declined to perform surgery or prepare food and medicines for the sick with their own hands.

<sup>466</sup> Trevor-Roper, 2006: 26; for French Paracelsians, see Debus, 1991.

and divine wisdom, in adherence to the esoteric philosophical and religious tradition of Hermeticism.<sup>467</sup> Thus by emphasising the physician's hands Rubens must have been aware, as Brian Nance puts it, that "theory and practice did not exist in Mayerne's mind as binary opposites, but as [an] integrated medical outlook that served as the basis for action."<sup>468</sup>

Moreover, Rubens visually articulates the particularities of Mayerne's medical eclecticism: on the one side, Paracelsianism, iatrochemistry and Hermeticism; on the other, traditional Greek medical theory and the Hippocratic laws.<sup>469</sup> This eclecticism is also palpable in Mayerne's portrait by John Hoskins (1635, Green Templeton College, University of Oxford; fig. 46), in which Mayerne pays tribute to Hippocrates by holding his bust, as well as to Hermes Trismegistus, whose name can be seen inscribed in the book under the bust.<sup>470</sup> The fact that the name of the ancient physician can be clearly read as "ΙΙΠΠΟΚΡΑΤΗΣ", while only the first letters of Hermes' name are visible ("HERM"), is to juxtapose, in my opinion, the obscurity of the writings of Hermes and the secrets of Nature, with, by contrast, Hippocrates' more revealing language.<sup>471</sup> Not coincidentally, the word "hermetic" today has come to describe something "completely sealed". Mayerne, who was very proud of the "secrets" he revealed through his experiments, in both Hoskins' and Rubens' portraits keeps his mouth "hermetically" sealed, articulating thus the influence of

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<sup>467</sup> Debus, 1991: 6, 9, 11-12; Cook, 2006: 421-23.

<sup>468</sup> Nance, 2001: xi.

<sup>469</sup> For iatrochemistry, see Lindemann, 1999 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.): 77-85; Debus, 1992: 262-68; Cook, 2006: 422-23.

<sup>470</sup> Trevor-Roper, 2006: 370; one identical copy survives at Longleat House.

<sup>471</sup> Hermes (/Mercury) Trismegistus enjoyed great popularity during the early modern period through the writings attributed to him, *Asclepius* and *Corpus Hermeticum*. While through language investigation Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614) showed that the writings were not dated earlier than the second or third century C.E., the fascination with them continued for a long time. Marcilio Ficino considered Hermes to be a crucial part of the lineage of wisdom and the *prisca theologia*. Accordingly, divine wisdom was transmitted from Moses, to Hermes and then through Pythagoras, Orpheus and Zoroaster, to reach Plato; see Voss, 2006: 16.

Hermeticism. On the other hand, his eyes are telling and thoughtful, as knowing much but revealing little.

Mayerne's lips can be contrasted with those of another physician and friend of Rubens, Ludovicus Nonnius (fig. 15). By contrast, Nonnius' mouth is slightly open, while the gesture of his hands further implies his eloquence, as indicated by the *Diaeteticon* he had recently published.<sup>472</sup> Nonnius' iconography is closer to the traditional ideas of the eloquence and writing abilities of the physician-philosopher, while the books on the shelf further communicate to his humanistic understanding of medicine. A look at the contents of the *Diaeteticon* confirms that Nonnius drew more on the authenticity of ancient sources rather than on personal examination and *autopsia*. The fact that in Mayerne's portrait Rubens dispenses with motifs of theoretical knowledge, such as books and speech (through open mouth and gestures), and by contrast, emphasises practical skills and Hermeticism, suggests that he was well-aware of the professional identity of his friends.

Furthermore, the sculpture of the ancient Greek god of medicine Asclepius, depicted in the niche, expresses Mayerne's professional self-understanding. It explicitly signals Mayerne's adherence to Hermeticism. Asclepius was the main protagonist of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, while the second important work attributed to Hermes Trismegistus was titled *Asklepius*. Both these works identify Asclepius as the popular god of medicine.<sup>473</sup> They were extremely influential writings in Rubens' time and constituted the base of alchemical studies. It is noteworthy that Mayerne's cloak can be seen as a response to the *himation* of

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<sup>472</sup> Nonnius, 1627; for the illustrated speech and eloquence of Nonnius in this portrait, see Bomford, 2000: ch. 2, esp. 113-19.

<sup>473</sup> See Copenhaver, 1992.

Asclepius, and might be regarded as articulating the affinity between the two men, with Mayerne being a disciple of the god.<sup>474</sup>

The panoramic view out of the window also bears significance in the visual construction of Mayerne's identity. The ship amidst the turbulent tide approaching a lantern may be understood as suggesting Mayerne's vigilance – a lantern inviting his patients and providing them with safety, guidance and cure regardless of the storms of disease.<sup>475</sup> Besides the alchemical symbolism that water and a ship might constitute, the lighthouse could well be informed by a Christian interpretation.<sup>476</sup> Light has been long regarded by both Protestants and Catholics as a sign of Christ and everything good and virtuous.<sup>477</sup> Contrary to Trevor-Roper, who proposed that Rubens “drew symbolism from Catholic or classic sources”, I would suggest that the lantern should be seen as a general reference to Christianity and as a unifying symbol of the aspirations of the two men.<sup>478</sup> It should be remembered that Rubens, besides his invaluable contribution to Catholic art, also

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<sup>474</sup> Mayerne's dress is more evidently associated with antiquity in his portrait with a Roman toga by an unknown artist (c. 1625, National Portrait Gallery, London).

<sup>475</sup> This interpretation is suggested by Mayerne's letter to Rubens; see here p. 154.

<sup>476</sup> In alchemical imagery the ship is seen as the vessel in which the process of purification of the old metal and its rebirth in a new form (*nigredo*) takes place (Abraham, 1998: 78, 135-36, 183). Lyndy Abraham remarks (ibid.: 135, 183) that “during dissolution, the water element dominates the other elements in the work, and so the *nigredo* is sometimes symbolised by the image of the flood, with the vessel as ark or ship floating on the waters”. In this view Mayerne might have seen himself as the light/lantern which safely directs the ship/*nigredo* or even as another Noah, who according to alchemical legend is said to have kept safe from the Flood the secrets of alchemy, the Emerald Table and the philosopher's stone (136). The turbulent waters become then a symbol of dissolution and rebirth with clear connotations of the medical profession's healing and rejuvenation of the human body.

<sup>477</sup> Light is addressed in numerous quotations from the Old and New Testaments, the Gospels, and the Revelation of John, with the most popular presumably being the words of Christ: “I am the Light of the world... He who follows me can never walk in darkness; he will possess the light which is life” (John: 8: 12); ‘New Advent Bible: John’, <http://www.newadvent.org/bible/joh008.htm> (accessed 18 August 2014). Alternatively, there is the passage that Mayerne could have read as personal “gloire”: “your light must shine so brightly before men that they can see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven”, which Jesus said to his followers (Matthew: 5: 16); ‘New Advent Bible: Matthew’, <http://www.newadvent.org/bible/mat005.htm> (accessed 18 August 2014). Matthew's words as an interpretation of the lantern have also been suggested by Rupert Martin (1986: 10), who further related the iconographic element with an emblem of Jacob Cats' of a ship guided by a beacon and a cupid.

<sup>478</sup> Trevor-Roper, 2006: 352.

worked for Protestant patrons and friends. What is often underestimated in contemporary literature is that Rubens well knew how to appropriately adjust his iconography according to the religious background of his commissioners.

In conclusion, the portrait responds to the formality and conventions of early modern portraiture, and the familiarity of the painter with the sitter is expressed in the insightful elaboration of his medical identity. This further sheds light on the process of portraiture as a social activity with conversation, exchange and sharing at its heart. This activity brings forth the portrait as the spiritual offspring of two friends. In this framework, the sublimation of the sitter cannot be seen merely as intending to please him, but as encapsulating the “bonnes heures” and fruitful intercourse between the two men, and as embodying the identities of both sitter and painter.

Mayerne and Rubens’ intellectual exchange continued after Rubens’ departure from England. A portrait of Mayerne, found in the painter’s personal collection in Antwerp after his death, could have functioned as a surrogate for an absent friend, as well as for the qualities of their friendship.<sup>479</sup> Likewise, Mayerne’s portrait in his own place might have served a similar role. Looking at the portrait as well as Rubens’ written notes, Mayerne would have “seen” his absent friend. This materialised presence of a friend could further recall and cultivate the ideas they exchanged and thus made a difference in their daily lives. For example, it is tempting to think that Mayerne’s painterly presence in the artist’s home reinforced Rubens’ interest in Paracelsian writers and famous alchemists. It is highly likely that it enhanced Rubens’ purchase from the Plantin House of the *Vita Pythagorae* in

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<sup>479</sup> For the portrait of Mayerne in the *Specification* (“Vn pourtrait du Medecin Maierna”), see Muller, 1989, no. 100: 17, 61, 115. Muller explains the place of the portrait in Rubens’ collection “by friendship and reverence”.

1632, including Ficino's translation of the *Pimander* (the first book of the *Corpus Hermeticum*) and *Asclepius*, both by Hermes Trismegistus.<sup>480</sup>

Nevertheless, the exchange between the physician and the painter and the enmeshment of medicine and painting seems to me to have been encouraged by Mayerne and Rubens' common views on the cosmos and their deep desire for knowledge and order. How this could foster friendship is suggested by Rubens' contribution to the *album amicorum* of his Antwerpian friend, merchant and art collector, Philips van Valckenisse, before the artist's departure for Italy (1557-1614; fig. 47). Rubens dedicates it to "D. Philippo Valckennistio / In Amicitiae monumentum / Petrus Paulus Ruebens / Pictor Posuit" ("To Lord Filips van Valckenisse, Rubens, painter, dedicates this monument of friendship"). Above this he draws a circle with a compass with a highlighted dot in the middle and the motto "Medio Deus omnia campo", meaning "God is everything in the center of the field".<sup>481</sup> The circle, the most perfect and divine shape according to Pythagoras and Plato, is a symbol of the macrocosm, which includes everything in it. The man is merely a dot, but in the centre of the macrocosm, while the motto emphasises that man has God and a divine power inside him; he is an image of God.<sup>482</sup> But in what ways can Rubens' drawing be a monument to friendship? Most likely, by sharing the same beliefs in the same microcosmic body.

Rubens' essay *Super Figura Humana Discursus Cabalisticus* (*Cabalistic Discourse on the Human Figure*) might further illuminate his drawing. A phrase which as Tine

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<sup>480</sup> However, Rubens' interest in Pythagoras had been expressed much earlier with the Johnson manuscript (for this see here p. 14, fn. 2), which explicitly refers to Pythagoras and widely articulates Pythagorean doctrines. Also pertinent is Rubens' collaborative painting with Frans Snyders, *Pythagoras Advocating Vegetarianism* (1618-20, The Royal Collection, London), which Rubens kept in his house; see Georgoulia, forthcoming, 2015. For the book purchase, see Arents, 2001: E162.

<sup>481</sup> Meganck, 2007: no. 58, 187.

<sup>482</sup> Oppenheimer has suggested that the "drawing and inscription were thus intended in a real sense to graph the imagination of God, and his own spiritual beliefs"; 1999: 163-66, esp. 164.



Meganck suggests, can be attributed to Hermes Trismegistus' *Tabula Smaragdina* (*Emerald Tablet*), states: "In forma sive figura hominis omnia sunt, et omnes mundi, qui microcosmos est" ("Everything is in the form or figure of the man, and everything in the world, which is the microcosm").<sup>483</sup> The analogy between microcosm-macrocosm and the theory of cosmos it entails should not be seen, in my view, as an abstract theory, but as a principle practically applied in daily life (discussed in more detail in chapter 4). It is through materiality that it permeates Rubens' art and embodies his own human figures, which in turn transgress materiality to function at a spiritual level. Both Rubens and Mayerne were struggling to reveal the little world, the *mikros kosmos*, concealed in the human body, whose structure and function was perceived to respond to the *me gas kosmos*. Understanding the human organism and its relation to human society provided an insight into the universe and a revelation of divine wisdom; a basic Platonian principle.

Mayerne's medical system was based on the control of sympathies and antipathies between these two worlds interrelated by chemical laws. Through chemistry and experiments he attempted to gain divine wisdom. Similarly, it was with his brush and paint that Rubens remarked that he had found "the true Lapis Philosophicus".<sup>484</sup> In my opinion, it was this search for the *Lapis Philosophicus* that strengthened the communication between the two men. It was the belief that the microcosm or the body politic should mirror the balance and order of the macrocosm, and that this made it a duty for the man to struggle for order and contribute to good government – as both Mayerne and Rubens attempted to do with their activities on the political stage. Their activities as diplomatic

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<sup>483</sup> MS 1978, PG 1: 76<sup>r</sup>-76<sup>v</sup> (also De Ganay: 52<sup>r</sup>-52<sup>v</sup>); qt. MS 1978, PG 1: 76<sup>r</sup>; Meganck (2007: 60-61) has noted that this phrase is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus' *Tabula Smaragdina* (*Emerald Tablet*). I thank Dr Rachel Sloan for giving me access to the Johnson manuscript despite its fragility.

<sup>484</sup> Sandrart, 1675, II, 3, p. 292; "wahrhaften Lapidem Philosophicum".

agents should be also considered as contributing towards this balance, as also their common strategic movements towards ennoblement, social and professional recognition, noble marriage, courteous self-fashioning and their achievement of country estates. They also shared a critique of the court and the life of the courtier, and finally, both experienced frustration with the court.<sup>485</sup> It was their belief, which is largely reflected in early modern writings and classical authors of antiquity, that social concord and political order can be achieved by virtuous intercourse, civil conversation and intellectual exchange.

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<sup>485</sup> Trevor-Roper, 2006: 14-15, 19, 79, 110, 115.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PHILOSOPHER'S BODY: THE ELOQUENCE OF PHYSIOLOGY IN RUBENS' *DEMOCRITUS AND HERACLITUS* (1603) AND THE REPERCUSSIONS OF POLITICS

*...Painters doe expresse with colours what Writers doe describe with words; so is it that they doe but differ in the matter and manner of Imitation, having both the same end: and he is the best Historian that can adorne his Narration with such forcible figures and lively colours of Rhetorike, as to make it like unto a Picture [Plutarch].*

*...Picture, sayth he [Quintilian], a silent worke, and constantly keeping the same forme, doth so insinuate it selfe into our most inward affections, that it seemeth now and then to be of greater force then Eloquence it selfe.<sup>486</sup>*

The analogy of a painter with an orator, writer, historian, poet and philosopher is frequently addressed in early modern art treatises and discourses. These largely adapt rhetorical theories of classical writers to painting.<sup>487</sup> The formula *ut pictura rhetorica* does not merely elevate painting above the status of a manual art, but more importantly throws light on the rhetorical foundation of painting. Rhetoric was understood as a practical code of conduct, which moulds characters, changes behaviour, affects judgments and thus potentially leads to virtue and goodness. Like rhetoric, painting was seen as having the potential to teach, delight and move. The rhetorical skills of the painter fortify the

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<sup>486</sup> Junius, 1638: bk. II, 54, 56; Junius quotes from Plutarch's essay *De gloria Atheniensium*, IV: 3; and from Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, XI, 4.

<sup>487</sup> For a recent extensive discussion on the rhetorical power of early modern painting, see Weststeijn, 2008.

persuasiveness of his/her works and their power to manipulate emotions and evoke an enduring change in the beholder.

As explicitly suggested by Franciscus Junius in the quote above, the common subject matter and the interaction with the audience enhance the analogy between painting and rhetoric. However, divergence is argued to lie in the matter and manner of rendering. In contrast to verbal rendering, pictures take advantage of visibility, and albeit “silent” they can be more eloquent and affective through their colouring and form. Writers, on the other hand, “do describe” or “narrate”, as Plutarch’s extract is often translated.<sup>488</sup> Yet, eloquence and rhetorical skills were regarded as a prerequisite for both a successful verbal or pictorial elaboration, as well as for a wide range of occupations. The previous chapter suggested that eloquence, conversation and sociability cannot only be traced in written and verbal material, but can be also integrated into visual objects, producing a new context. This chapter will illuminate another aspect of pictorial eloquence by visually tracing Rubens’ early diplomatic skills and ambitions.

Scholars have long argued that painting and diplomacy were interlinked for Rubens.<sup>489</sup> Elizabeth McGrath has demonstrated the “improbable diplomatic artistry” of Rubens’ Medici cycle by cogently arguing that the open-textured quality of the allegories was a desired, political tool.<sup>490</sup> The adaptability of the paintings is explicitly suggested, as McGrath argues, by Rubens’ remark in a letter to Peiresc that the courtier M. de St. Amboise “served as interpreter of the subjects, changing or concealing the true meaning

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<sup>488</sup> Plutarch *De gloria Atheniensium*, 1936, IV: 3.

<sup>489</sup> For Rubens as diplomat, see: Heinen 2002, 2006, 2011; Auwers, 2010, 2011; von Simpson, 1996. Important remarks on Rubens’ diplomatic activity were made by the conference *Rubens and the Thirty Years War: Dynastic Politics, Diplomacy and the Arts, c. 1618-1635* (10-11 May 2012, Antwerp, Rubenianum), organised by Malcolm Smuts.

<sup>490</sup> McGrath, 1980: qt. 11.

with great skill.”<sup>491</sup> More recently, Ulrich Heinen has argued that Rubens’ artistic work played an active role in supporting his diplomatic peace mission to England, with his paintings *Peace and War* (c. 1629-30, National Gallery, London) and *Venus, Mars and Amor* (c. 1630, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London), functioning as a “visual speech act”.<sup>492</sup> A picture, as Heinen persuasively suggests, stimulates discussion and tests the position of the beholder to the negotiations. The open-textured nature of the visual medium avoids conflicts words can more easily produce.<sup>493</sup>

The present discussion focuses on Rubens’ painting *Democritus and Heraclitus* (1603, Museo de Escultura, Valladolid) and enquires into the possibilities and limitations of this image as a diplomatic tool for the achievement of the artist’s earliest diplomatic ambitions (fig. 11). It argues that the suppleness of the subject matter and the pictorial rendering produce a rich context and polyphony of meanings, which might well have aimed at being deliberately ambiguous. The painting is understood here as a forum for rich interactions among painted bodies, living bodies and the physicality of painting. Drawing on a large variety of material on medicine, literature, cartography, philosophy, art history and politics, the chapter elucidates the painting’s dialectic between endogenous and exogenous agents, which produce a living context.

The previous chapter looked at the painterly human body as a locus of, and forum for, friendly conversation. This chapter further underlines the painted body as the stimulus of discussion, having its own argumentative voice to affect and shape the body and views of the beholder. It is argued that the persuasiveness of the body lies in its physiological

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<sup>491</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 62 (13 May 1625): 109.

<sup>492</sup> Heinen, 2011.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*: 39.

eloquence. The painting's physiological analysis is not restricted to the rendering of emotions, but also expands to every element of the outer appearance and the body's temperamental constitution from the outer body to the inner, from bodily traits to dress, and from the physicality of the body to that of the brush. While the strong rhetorical foundation of early modern medicine has been persuasively discussed by scholars, this chapter will offer an alternative view of the rhetoric of medicine.<sup>494</sup> By recourse to early modern physiology, it will ask how the painted body acquired persuasive force through its physiological rendering, and how painting was expected to alter the bodily constitution and humours of the beholder, and hence also the beholder's passions and character. Finally, *Democritus and Heraclitus* is considered as a medium that was aimed at subtly directing the spectator's thinking to contemporary political matters and stimulating discussion. From this point of view, the chapter also makes a contribution to studies on diplomatic culture. While such studies are largely focused on textual material, I will argue here that the subjectivity and polyphony of images must be considered as well.<sup>495</sup>

The subject of *Democritus and Heraclitus*, which became very popular during the seventeenth century, looks at first sight quite normative and easily identifiable. Rubens places the two Greek, pre-Socratic philosophers, Democritus and Heraclitus, in an outdoor setting in front of an oak tree, with the earth's sphere between them. Their names, inscribed on their garments in Greek letters, identify the Thracian Democritus (c.460-c.

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<sup>494</sup> Pender and Struever, 2012.

<sup>495</sup> See e.g. Adams and Cox (eds), 2011. The collected essays are an important attempt to explore the cultural aspects of early modern diplomacy. Nevertheless, the role of the visual arts in diplomatic culture is neglected. However, a renewed interest in the representations of early modern diplomacy is currently taking place which supports an interdisciplinary approach. The recent workshops at the University of Durham, "Translating cultures: Diplomacy between the early modern and modern worlds" as well as the international conference "Diplomacy and Culture in the Early Modern World" are indicative of this so-called "cultural turn" in diplomatic studies. See <https://www.dur.ac.uk/history/tdproject/> and <http://www.textualambassadors.org/?p=365>.

370 BC) on the left and Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 535-c. 475 BC) on the right. The philosophers confront the viewer, but without gazing at him/her directly. The different moods of the philosophers engage with the spectator; the smiling Democritus contrasts Heraclitus' sadness. Democritus and Heraclitus largely owed their popularity to the revival of classical texts that addressed the different reactions of the two men to the folly of humankind.<sup>496</sup>

Rubens' gifted this painting to the duke of Lerma, when undertaking his first diplomatic mission to Madrid as an envoy of Vincenzo I Gonzaga, duke of Mantua, to Philip III of Spain. Rubens was charged with the delivery of gifts, sent as presents from the duke of Mantua to the Spanish court and aimed at strengthening the political bond between the small principality of Mantua and its Spanish "protector".<sup>497</sup> As soon as Rubens arrived in Valladolid in May 1603, he found it necessary to replace some of the paintings that were included among the diplomatic gifts with one of his own works: according to the artist, the

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<sup>496</sup> The antithetical moods of the philosophers are discussed by many Roman and Greek authors. Seneca, in his essay on *Anger* (1995: 50), contrasts Heraclitus, who "wept, whenever he went out and saw so many lives wretchedly lived... By contrast, they say, Democritus was never seen in public without a smile on his face". Seneca also notes that many occasions seem to offer a good reason for getting angry, but they can actually offer joy and laughter. On such an occasion, as Martha Nussbaum (2009: 87, 89) argues, "Seneca steps from his own anger and laughs at himself for having taken such things seriously". In that case, laughter achieves "a progress beyond the grief, or fear, or anger", derives from self-examination and thus acquires a therapeutic meaning. Lucian of Samosata (1952: 422) makes fun of the two philosophers in his *Ways of Life for Sale*, in which, among other philosophers, he tries in vain to sell Heraclitus and Democritus. Juvenal also says (1991, *Satires*, X: 28-33): "...you may well approve the two philosophers: one of them used to laugh whenever he closed the door and stepped into the street; his opposite number would weep. While harsh censorious laughter is universal and easy, one wonders how the other's eyes were supplied with moisture. Democritus' sides would shake with gales of incessant laughter". According to Cicero (1762, *De Oratore* II.58: 232): "What laughter itself is how it is excited, where it lies, how it exists, and bursts forth so suddenly, that we are unable to refrain it, though we desire to do so, and how it occupies at once the sides, the face, the veins, the countenance, the eyes, let Democritus consider". Horace (*Epistle*, II.i. 194, in Moratius-Flaccus, 1929) wrote: "Were Democritus still on earth, he would laugh". Laertius (1702: 385) related Heraclitus' melancholy: "He affected an obscure way of Writing, to keep his Thoughts out of the reach of the Vulgar; and perhaps part of his Obscurity is owing to that excess of Melancholy, that made him leave things unfinished, and oftentimes wrote contrary things". However, also according to Laertius, Democritus' "continual Laughing upon all Occasions" was seen by his countrymen as a sign of madness, albeit falsely (396-97). For copies of the ancient books discussed here in the library of the Alcázar, see Bouza, 2005.

<sup>497</sup> Rubens' mission must be interpreted as part of the common practice of gift-making in building alliances and consolidating political power. Carrió-Invernizzi, 2008; Frigo, 2000.

“daily rains and violent winds” had destroyed them, so he painted *Democritus and Heraclitus* as a replacement.<sup>498</sup> Whether it was necessary for the paintings to be replaced is open to doubt. In any case, Rubens grasped the opportunity to gain access to the Spanish court and establish connections with high-ranking men such as the king’s *privado*, the duke of Lerma, a man of great power, who wielded an authority and control over political issues previously unknown for a noble. Rubens might have also intended, through Lerma and the Spanish court, to reach the rulers of the Southern Netherlands and his home country, Archdukes Albert and Clara Isabel Eugenia.<sup>499</sup> The first contact with Lerma was undoubtedly successful, as Michael Jaffé noted, since the duke ordered Rubens to paint his equestrian portrait (Museo del Prado, 1603).<sup>500</sup>

We can assume that Rubens was selected to carry out this mission because of his discretion.<sup>501</sup> The duke might also have appreciated Rubens’ conversational skills, eloquence, erudition, agreeable character, and good-looking appearance – which were much praised by his contemporaries and biographers – as well as his court manners, cultivated since his childhood as a page for the countess of Lalaing.<sup>502</sup> Rubens’ future engagement in diplomatic affairs and his appointment as a court painter to the Archdukes

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<sup>498</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 7 (17 May 1603): 31. For this trip by Rubens to Spain, see Vergara, 1999: 6-18.

<sup>499</sup> Later Rubens was to become not only the court painter to the Archdukes, but also Isabel’s personal diplomat. For the important role that Isabel played in Rubens’ rising diplomatic career, see Auwers, 2011. For Lerma’s power in the court of Philip III, see Feros, 2000; and Williams 2006. For the correspondence between Lerma and Clara Eugenia, see Rodríguez Villa, 1906; and, Sánchez (2011), who questions whether there was an affectionate relationship between Lerma and the Infanta, or whether it was part of a larger strategy on both sides.

<sup>500</sup> Jaffé, 1968: 187.

<sup>501</sup> The dukes of Mantua were among the first rulers who attempted to protect diplomatic dispatches by entrusting them to special couriers instead of the normal postal system; see further Anderson, 1993: 21.

<sup>502</sup> Belkin, 1998: 22. The descriptions of Rubens largely correspond to those of the “ideal ambassador” as found in Alberico Gentili’s *De Legationibus*, 1585, and Jean Hotman’s *The Ambassador*, 1603. See for example how the rhetorical skills of the ambassador discussed in these treatises conform to the praise by De Piles of Rubens’ eloquence, conversation, speech, voice and natural persuasiveness (see in this thesis, ch. 2, the opening quotation). See also Anderson, 1993: 26-27.



upon his return to Antwerp in 1609 suggests that the twenty-six-year-old artist had not only artistic but also political ambitions.<sup>503</sup> That Rubens saw *Democritus and Heraclitus* as a means to further his ambitions is evidenced by his contemporary letter to Chieppio, the chief counsellor to the duke at Mantua, to whom he complains that no painting by his hand was included in the presents for the Spanish court.<sup>504</sup> As I will show below, this little-discussed painting illustrates that art and diplomacy were closely intertwined for Rubens.<sup>505</sup>

Despite the subject matter being from antiquity, it raises the idea of supra-temporality, which transcends time limits to conjure up not only the figure of Heraclitus with his posterior Democritus, but most uncommonly pictures this pair of philosophers with an early modern globe. Elizabeth McGrath noticed that a prime meridian, a compass rose and loxodromes are placed on the globe. On the compass rose we read the Latin inscription “OCEANUS OCCIDENTALIS” (Atlantic Ocean), indicating on the left the Americas and on the right the European countries.<sup>506</sup> The philosophers are re-cast in a modern guise tailored to transmit concepts to do with current political affairs. The philosophers were used in a similar manner in contemporary Spanish literature.<sup>507</sup> In both Bartolomé

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<sup>503</sup> For Rubens’ early political ambitions, see Auwers, 2011.

<sup>504</sup> “To this task [to restore the damaged works] I shall not fail to apply all my skill, since it has pleased His Most Serene Highness to make me guardian and bearer of the works of others, without including a brushstroke of my own”. He also adds that Signor Hannibal “wants me to do several pictures in great haste”, underlining thus the trust that Hannibal shows in his talent; Rubens, 1955, letter 8 (24 May 1603): 33.

<sup>505</sup> McGrath provides the most comprehensive study of this painting; 1997: I, 101-103, II, fig. 36, no. 8, 52-57. See also Vergara, 1999: 16-17; and, Jaffé, 2005: no. 18, 76-77.

<sup>506</sup> McGrath, 1997: II, 55.

<sup>507</sup> For the popularity of the philosophers in early modern Spanish literature, see García Gómez, 1984, who argues that two sources contributed to their wide dissemination, especially Democritus. First is the collection of letters attributed to Hippocrates and especially the letter to Damagetes, which narrates the meeting and discussion of Democritus and Hippocrates. The letter was widely transmitted, mainly through the Latin translation by the Roman professor Rinucci de Castiglione published in Florence in 1487. For the dissemination of the letter and subsequent editions, see García Gómez, 1984: 95-98. The second source is the Greek epigram which was published for the first time in the *Anthologia Planudiana* (1494), titled as *In vitam*

Leonardo de Argensola's *Demócrito* of the first decade of the seventeenth century and Antonio López de Vega's *Heráclito y Demócrito de nuestro siglo. Descrívese su legítimo filósofo* from 1641, the philosophers function as commentators on socio-political affairs, criticise society's corruption and court life, and offer advice.<sup>508</sup> The early modern globe can thus be seen as a linchpin between the ancient philosophers and early modern society. The "Spanish" philosophers are placed beside "nuestro siglo" ("our century"), as López de Vega would say. In this chapter, the adaptability to Rubens' age of the supra-temporality of Democritus and Heraclitus will be illuminated, after first exploring the philosophers' bodies. I will suggest that the multiplicity of meanings, largely produced through inner conflicts and at times a coalescence between their bodies, is aimed at raising questions about the state of war in Europe, specifically in Flanders.

### Physiology and humoral imbalance

The bodies of Democritus and Heraclitus construct a great pictorial polyphony as regards colouring, brushwork, anatomical and physiological rendering, expression, gesture and

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*humanam*, and transmitted through *Alciato Emblematum liber*. The short poem promoted the contrasting views of the philosophers towards the world by exaggerating them to cry and laugh more about the contemporary world. In 1529 the Greek poem was included in the volume *Selecta Epigrammata Graeca*, published in Basle. In the same volume Simoneta, Alciato and Velius render the text in Latin. In 1531, Alciato included the same translation in his *Emblematum Liber* (which had probably circulated in Milan in manuscript since 1522). The poem was included in all the subsequent editions except the Aldine edition of 1546, which included only new emblems. It is noteworthy that a copy of this book is testified in the library of Philip IV in the Torre Alta del Alcázar de Madrid, Bouza, 2005: 469; see further García Gómez, 1984: 98-110, 281-86.

<sup>508</sup> A copy of Argensola's *Demócrito* is testified in the Torre Alta library of Alcázar; see Bouza, 2005 [extra-11]: 551. A critique of the accumulated power of Lerma might be implied by Democritus' words: "cuán mal usan de ellas los que están apoderados de su gracia; y aun en este articulo me suelo yo reir de que piense aquel rey que cumple con sus obligaciones libebrande el peso dellas en sus ministros"; Argensola, II, 1889: 149; trans. "how badly the ones who have the power of grace cope with their obligations; and in this paper I laugh at the thoughts of those kings who leave their obligations to their ministers." I would like to thank Mar Oltra Pérez for the Spanish translations in this chapter.

While Green suggests (1935: 279, fn. 29) that the criticism of the "ministros" should be related more to the last years of the reign of Philip II, it seems to me that this comment addresses the duke of Lerma, who was Philip III's favourite when the *Demócrito* was published, and was much criticised for his enormous power.

moods. Reddish tones predominate in Democritus with his light, pink cheeks and lips reflected on the pigments of his beard and his red and vibrant cloak. This further illuminates his rosy, soft and youthful skin under which the blood and veins are visible (fig. 49). The richness of his hair, head and face, indicate the masculinity and male vigour of a man in the prime of his life.<sup>509</sup> On the other hand, Heraclitus is depicted as a much older man with dark circles under his eyes (fig. 50). His skin is dark and pale with greenish and blue tints and with his facial skin having lost its elasticity. However, the tight skin of his muscular arm and neck denote that strength is not totally lost.

Not only is Heraclitus' colouring darker, but the physicality of the brushwork is different from that of Democritus, whose smooth and luminous skin is painted in a more uniform manner. In contrast to the loose brushwork we see in Democritus, in Heraclitus' ageing skin, the brushwork reveals its rough and sudden marks as well as its layers.<sup>510</sup> The ageing effect is conveyed through grayish tones and the impasto which renders the plasticity of the skin. The smoother parts of Heraclitus' hand, chest and neck create the illusion of a perpetually changing, ageing epidermis. The variety of brushwork, in combination with the pigment choices, conveys not only a sense of the difference in ageing, but it also constitutes the different humoral constitutions of the philosophers. Heraclitus' skin is depicted as dry and cold, whilst Democritus' is moist and warm, corresponding therefore to their traditionally popular antithetical temperaments.

While Heraclitus' temperament was famously identified as melancholic, Democritus' temperament was contrasted to Heraclitus but not clearly addressed as one of the main

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<sup>509</sup> See here ch. 3: 158-59.

<sup>510</sup> Weststeijn in his study of the art theory of Samuel van Hoogstraten interestingly relates "rough brushwork" – much appreciated in Dutch art – to rhetorical persuasion; 2008: 229-41.

temperaments. However, Democritus' warmer and moister complexion is consistent with showing a sanguine temperament, although there has been no consensus in early modern or recent studies as to whether he was sanguine, or sanguine tempered with melancholy.<sup>511</sup> It seems to me that Democritus' cheerful constitution was interpreted variously according to the purposes of the writer or artist. In this painting, Rubens' Democritus is depicted with a sanguine temperament in contrast to Heraclitus' melancholy. Nevertheless, Rubens dispenses with the extreme forms of these temperaments. As will be discussed below, he renders the bodies of the philosophers as being of a mild humoral imbalance only.

Rubens' virtuosity in rendering the constitutions of the philosophers is informed by humoral physiology. As shown already in previous chapters, physical appearance, character, behavioural traits, psychology and passions were associated with the temperament of the individual. Temperamental changes presupposed the alteration of the quality or quantity of the humours of an individual body. This deeply altered how a person experienced and understood his/her body. By implication, the viewing and beholding of painted bodies was largely informed by humoral theory.

Consequently, painted matter should be seen as externalising the "unseen" and materialising the inward humoral imbalance, character and passions. Both Democritus and Heraclitus deviate from a perfect balance of the body. According to Rubens' depiction, Democritus has an excess of blood whilst Heraclitus has an excess of black bile. Democritus' sanguinary constitution explains his reddish skin, his faint smile and smiling eyes with their lively twinkle, his energy, pleasant discussion and comfortable gesturing.

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<sup>511</sup> Lepage, 2012, 81- 135; Lund, 2010: 152-66.

The discussion of Democritus' supposed melancholy is largely based on Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. To me, Burton's approach to Democritus' temperament is quite ambivalent. See also this chapter, p. 189, fn. 537.

On the other hand, Heraclitus' dark palette, his shrunken, deep and thoughtful eyes, sad expression and closed mouth denote a melancholic temperament. Additionally, the rendering of the philosophers' temperamental constitutions is supported by the gestures of their hands. Democritus' expressive hands move comfortably over the globe and towards Heraclitus. He thus represents an outgoing character who leads the discussion, as visualised by his slightly opened mouth. Heraclitus' wringing hands signify a more closed-off and passive person who prefers conducting inner dialogues with himself rather than reacting outwards to the other. The sharp contrast between them becomes more vivid when looking at their cloaks, which should not be seen as lifeless objects, but as expanding and further constructing the fabric of the body. Functioning as an outer layer of the body, the red cloak of Democritus indicates a surplus of blood, whereas the black gown of Heraclitus materialises his excess of black bile.

This painting clearly registers Rubens' fascination with physiology and his interest in anatomy. During his eight-year stay in Italy (1600-1608), Rubens could have enriched his international medical knowledge. Italy, after all, was a leader in medical sciences. For young and ambitious students the Italian universities, such as those of Padua and Bologna, were centres of "intellectual pilgrimage".<sup>512</sup> The notebook on anatomy, which, according to Bellori, Rubens kept in Italy, his several anatomical studies which are most probably dated from this period, and the rich context of his library of Italian medical writers strongly support the contention that the artist profited from his exposure to Italian, medical culture. These issues were addressed in chapter 1, where it was also argued in relation to

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<sup>512</sup> Qt. de Ridder-Symoens, 2010: 56. The bibliography on Italy's leading role in early modern medicine is vast. For the international reputation of Italy's medical faculties, see e.g. Grell, Cunningham and Arrizabalaga (eds), 2010; and esp. for Padua Klestinec, 2010: 193-220. See also Siraisi, 2001. The most extensive study is de Ridder-Symoens: II, 1992-2011.

*Democritus and Heraclitus* that Rubens proceeded in a systematic way from the study of Vesalius' text to the painting of Heraclitus' face (fig. 12). This further indicates that in this Italian period Rubens assiduously explored anatomy and its pictorial rendering. This is also evidenced by Lipsius' face on the right margin in the *Self-portrait in a circle of friends from Mantua* (fig. 48). It shows a similar attempt, as seen in Heraclitus, to mark the form and veins of the aged and shrunken face. The physiological contrast is apparent here also – although not as sharp as in *Democritus and Heraclitus* – with the youthful, fresh and sanguinary face of Rubens juxtaposed to Lipsius' melancholic face and contemplative expression.

In *Democritus and Heraclitus*, the physiological contrast is much sharper due to the stark rendering of their emotional states. The exploration of laughing and weeping will offer a better insight to the philosophers' individual bodies and to the inner frictions produced by their emotional divergence. In early modern medical treatises, both laughing and weeping were considered as potentially dangerous emotional states. When in excess, the humoral imbalance they cause can drive to madness and even death. In the first monograph on laughter, the French physician Laurent Joubert (1529-82) opines that “laughter comes from an emotion in the heart” and “is provoked by deeds or words which have the appearance of ugliness and are not worthy of pity, except perhaps at first blush”.<sup>513</sup> Joubert explains that through the senses “the laughable matter” is carried to the heart where it creates heart spasms, and then these movements follow an upward route to the diaphragm, lungs and chest, interrupting the voice and continuing to the head.<sup>514</sup> Hence, it causes a series of movements to the mouth, lips, chin and eyes. It reddens and

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<sup>513</sup> Joubert, 1980: 62.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid.: 45-62.

distorts the face with wrinkles, shaking the body. Finally, laughter, as Joubert explains, can further cause sweating, pains, loss of consciousness and death.

On the other hand, weeping is caused by an emotional perturbation agitated by the compression of vapours in the brain with terrifying symptoms similar to laughter. These are addressed by the influential *Treatise of melancholie* from 1586, by British physician and clergyman Timothy Bright:

First of all it putteth finger in the eye, and sheadeth teares: then it baseth the countenance into the bosome: thirdlie it draweth the cheekes with a kinde of conuulsion on both sides, and turneth the countenance into a resemblaunce of girninge, and letteth the browes fall vppon the eye liddes; it bleareth the eyes, and maketh the cheekes redde: it causeth the heade to ake, the nose to runne, & mouth to slauer, the lippes to tremble: interrupteth the speeche, and shaketh the whole chest with sighes, and sobbes.<sup>515</sup>

While the early modern art treatises do not provide the artist with similar analytical information about the movement of the passions, affections and emotions from the inner body to the outer, their statements are consistent with medical treatises in that “passions and affections of the minde doe alter the countenance of man”.<sup>516</sup> Franciscus Junius urges the artist to observe with assiduity “the severall effects of these naturall commotions that doe transport our minde, and alter the ordinary lookes of our countenance”, in order that a painting’s viewer “reade in their eyes and countenance the severall faces of anger, love,

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<sup>515</sup> Bright, 1586: 136.

<sup>516</sup> Junius, 1638 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1637): bk III, ch. 1, 235.

feare, hope, scorne, joy, confidence, and other perturbations of our minde.”<sup>517</sup> Art theorists also provide guidance on the rendering of particular inner “motions of the mind” or “movement[s] of the soul”. Van Mander, for example, who perceives laughing and weeping as *affecten* and manifestations of the “motions of the mind”, explains that “through laughter the mouth and the cheeks broaden and rise, the forehead sinks, and between them both, the eyes are half shut and squeezed, making small wrinkles at the ears.”<sup>518</sup>

Laughing and weeping are addressed by Leonardo da Vinci in his popular notebook, in which he describes them as “sudden agitations of the mind” and “emotions of the soul”. In expressing these emotions, Da Vinci draws the attention of the painter to the face, especially to the eyebrows and mouth: “Those who weep, raise the brows, and bring them close together above the nose, forming many wrinkles on the forehead, and the corners of the mouth are turned downwards. Those who laugh have them turned upwards, and the brows open and extended.”<sup>519</sup> Da Vinci explains that laughing and weeping can be represented “as various as the cause of his feeling may be”.<sup>520</sup> This indicates that passions do not fall under simplistic categories of representation. Emotional variety and its relationship to causality give painters choices.

In relation to *Democritus and Heraclitus*, this is indicated by a contemporaneous drawing by Rubens, believed to be a study for the head of Heraclitus. The man is

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<sup>517</sup> Ibid.: 235-36.

<sup>518</sup> Van Mander, 1973: I, fol. 25<sup>v</sup>, 168-69; qt. after Schiller, 2010: 84; “Maer wy sien / als wy het leven bevljten / Dat door t'lachen mondt ende wanghen breyden / En rijsen / t'voorhoofd dealt / en tusschen beyden / D'ooghen half toeghedrukt zijn en ghedouwen/ Makende nae d'ooren toe cleyne vouwen.” For a study on laughter in Karel van Mander's *Den Grondt*, see Schiller, 2010.

<sup>519</sup> Da Vinci, 1877: 64-65. In his oil sketch *Four Studies of a Negro Head* (c. 1613-15, Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten), Rubens explicitly indicates his interest in facial expressions and emotions. Verberckmoes (1999: 44) questions whether these four heads represent the four temperaments.

<sup>520</sup> Da Vinci, 1877: 65.



represented as being of greater humoral imbalance, with his eyebrows and mouth indicating that he is about to cry (British Museum, fig. 51).<sup>521</sup> However, for Lerma's painting Rubens conceived a more moderate expression. For Democritus he selected a smile, rather than loud laughter which shakes the whole body and endangers life itself. Neither Democritus nor Heraclitus has tears either from laughter or crying. Heraclitus is obviously sad and melancholic, but no tears, red cheeks or shaking indicate perilous repercussions. The absence of extreme facial distortions indicates a mild rather than serious humoral imbalance.

The traditional aetiology of Democritus' laughter and Heraclitus' sadness is implied by the globe between them, namely the folly of humankind, or, by implication, the folly of contemporary society. This same cause made Democritus laugh and Heraclitus cry. In his investigation of laughing and weeping in early modern culture, Matthew Steggle concluded that "Democritus and Heraclitus encapsulate Renaissance constructions on laughing and weeping; they emblematised not merely the medical principle that the same external cause may cause different effects on different individuals, but also an ethical choice about how to relate to society".<sup>522</sup> We might therefore ask, how did the Spanish audience look at Rubens' painting? Undoubtedly, a part of it would have seen a humorous tone and nothing more than an amusing representation. Another part would have perceived Democritus and Heraclitus as instructors and advisers, since philosophers were seen as moral examples and ideal prototypes of learning through comparison.<sup>523</sup> Democritus and Heraclitus could address human folly, but nobody could feel offended since their ancient Greek roots gave

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<sup>521</sup> Rowlands, 1977: 28-29.

<sup>522</sup> Steggle, 2007: 22.

<sup>523</sup> Bouza, 2007.

them authority and “licence” to criticise. And after all, who could feel offended by the critique of two men who suffer from a humoral imbalance? Their bodily constitution could excuse their attitude.

The painting might also have attempted to engage with the beholder by stimulating discussion on the popular debate of which attitude is better: laughing or weeping? One might argue that Rubens does not seem to keep a neutral stance. The globe under Democritus’ hands may suggest Rubens’ preference for the laughing Democritus. The medieval world favoured Heraclitus’ tears, considered to be redemptive and more Christian, since Christ is not testified in the four Gospels as ever having laughed, but is many times depicted as weeping.<sup>524</sup> In the Renaissance though, Democritus’ laughter was re-conceptualised and Christianised. As Edgar Wind states: “In that contest of Mockery and Mirth *versus* Pity and Sorrow, the laughing philosopher has remained the winner, even within the Christian tradition.”<sup>525</sup> Laughing was traditionally seen in a more complex framework than weeping, which was perceived as an expression of sadness or fear. By giving Democritus the globe, Rubens, it seems to me, supports the positive force of laughter for improvement of the self and of others, even through contempt.

The Christianised Democritus is articulated by Cristoforo Landino (1424-98) in his second book of the *Camaldulensian Conversations*, entitled *De summo bono*. Here, Democritus’ *Eythymia* or inner peace is identified with the heavenly peace of the Scriptures. Likewise, the Sorbonne theologian and court preacher, Pierre de Besse, in his *Démocrite chrétien*, explains that it is better to laugh with Democritus because laughter shows that you are brave and strong when confronted with the vanities of the world and not

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<sup>524</sup> Wind, 1993: 83-85.

<sup>525</sup> Wind, 1937: 180.

overwhelmed by grief. Erycius Puteanus (1574-1646), Lipsius' successor at Louvain University, expressed his enthusiasm for Democritus' laughter over Heraclitus' tears. In his speech on Democritus at the university in December 1611, Puteanus connected Democritus' laugh to his profound wisdom, and emphasised the educational value of laughter and jokes by citing the paradigm of the ancients, "cum joco ad virtutem imus" ("with jokes we move to virtue").<sup>526</sup> According to Puteanus, "virili hilaritate... Virtutem & Doctrinam vestiunt" ("the cheerful men... are clothed with virtue and learning" and excel in "Ingenium, Eloquentiam, Prudentiam" ("*Ingenium* – innate gifts and talents – Eloquence, and Prudence").<sup>527</sup>

Laughing was also articulated as an expression of contempt for the vices and folly of humankind. Michel de Montaigne (1533-92) was an advocate of Democritus: "I prefer the first humour, not because it is pleasanter to laugh than to weep but because it expresses more contempt and is more condemnatory of us than the other".<sup>528</sup> The positive force of laughter and contempt as a means of social control has been persuasively pointed out by Quentin Skinner. By exploring landmark writings on civil conversation, Skinner illuminates the early modern use of laughter as a powerful means of keeping people "firmly within the established bounds of civil conversation and sociability."<sup>529</sup> In Stefano Guazzo's *Civil conversazione*, contempt, mockery and scorn are posited as a means to control the unsociable and "amende their manners and life": "in manner of mockerie, or of scorne, or of spyte, or by one way or another, will make him to understande his fault".<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>526</sup> Puteanus, 1612: qt. 22. Puteanus' *Democritus* was first published in 1612 and reprinted several times during the seventeenth century. See further Verberckmoes, 2000.

<sup>527</sup> Puteanus, 1612: dedication (not paginated).

<sup>528</sup> Montaigne, 1958: 132-33. Montaigne's *Essays* were translated into Spanish in 1637 by Diego de Cisneros, as Bouza notes (2007, n. 65).

<sup>529</sup> Skinner, 2004: esp. 139-49; 2013.

<sup>530</sup> Guazzo 1581 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1571): bk. 2, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>.

Laughter was also a means of promoting moralising and educative stories through widely circulated written or visual media. The lessons of young royals were often structured in the form of games, which shows that entertainment and laughter were believed to contribute to the learning process.<sup>531</sup> While some moralists still believed that laughter was deplorable, there is enough evidence that laughter and entertainment were practiced by courtiers and sovereigns, and offered so-called “intellectual pleasure”.<sup>532</sup>

Finally, laughter was also believed to significantly contribute to a healthy mental and bodily constitution, because of its power to counterbalance black bile and ill humours, and hence cure melancholy.<sup>533</sup> Several treatises published from the later fifteenth century emphasised the power of laughter “to recreate weary and melancholic spirits”, and hence remove melancholy.<sup>534</sup> For example, the Antwerpian doctor and Rubens’ acquaintance, Godefridus Vereycken (1558-1635), advises that moderate joy cures melancholy.<sup>535</sup> Furthermore, Michel Boudewijns (1600-81) writes that “if you have had suffering and sadness, that is a sure sign that joy will come, as these things alternate with each other”.<sup>536</sup> Democritus is illustrated in the title-page of Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of melancholy* in his attempt to cure melancholy, as disseminated by the pseudo-Hippocrates’ letter to

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<sup>531</sup> Hoffman, 2011: esp. 72. Hoffman refers to the books of Pedro de Guevara (*Arte general y breve*, 1584, *Nueva y sutil invención*, 1581), which were designed in the form of games in order to instruct the children of Philip II, the Infantas Catalina Micaela and Isabel Clara Eugenia, and also the multicoloured cards of Pedro Simón Abril for successfully teaching Prince Diego.

<sup>532</sup> See further Verberckmoes, 1998, 1999; for example, Charles V was not only famous for his good humour, but he was also the protagonist of many jokes (1999: 10-12, 148-49, 170). Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia was also known for her fondness for laughter (1999: 170). For laughter at the court of Philip II, see García Gómez, 1998.

<sup>533</sup> See also Gibson, 2006: 145.

<sup>534</sup> Gibson, 2006: 20; for the power of laughter to cure melancholy, see Verberckmoes, 1999: esp. 59-82; and Gibson, 2006: esp. 20, 24, 145-46.

<sup>535</sup> Vereycken, 1633: 94; Vereycken was the principal doctor attending Rubens’ first wife Isabella Brant, having been at her bedside when she died, probably from plague (20 June 1626); see further Baudouin, 1989: 265, 272.

<sup>536</sup> Boudewijns, 1654: 298; qt. after Verberckmoes, 1999: 66.

Damagetes.<sup>537</sup> Democritus in Rubens' painting might similarly adopt a physician's role, advising on the curative power of laughter. This interpretation could go a step further and enclose a personal message for Lerma, who was widely known as suffering from melancholy, to which he often attributed his removal from public audiences.<sup>538</sup> The death of his wife on 2 June 1603, which the historian and court chronicler Luis Cabrera de Córdoba recorded, possibly accentuated the duke's melancholy.<sup>539</sup>

Nonetheless, too much laughter was dangerous and harmful, not only for the physical body, as Joubert explained above, but also because it was a sign of foolishness, uncivilised behaviour and lack of self-control. Moderate laughing and smiling was considered instead a sign of virtue and civilised behaviour.<sup>540</sup> Thus, despite the fact that in his *Praise of Folly* Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) recommends laughing with Democritus, he warns in his *De civilitate morum puerilium* that "raucous laughter and uncontrollable giggles that rock the whole body...are not appropriate at any age."<sup>541</sup> The humanist Juan Luis Vives

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<sup>537</sup> The aim of the book, Burton says, is "to anatomize this humour of melancholy" and "to show the causes, symptoms, and several cures of it, that it may be the better avoided" (Burton, 2001: 120; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1621). Interestingly, in the preface Burton calls himself *Democritus Junior*, and among other images the frontispiece (1638 edition) depicts the author named as such. Another image shows the philosopher *Democritus Abderites*. As Burton explains, the image shows Democritus attempting to find out the "seat of black choler" by anatomising several creatures. It is probably the scene just before Hippocrates meets Democritus, as Laertius relates it and Burton narrates in detail (19-20, 47-52). For the letter to Damagetes, see here p. 177, fn. 507.

<sup>538</sup> Feros, 2000: 199. Luis Cabrera de Córdoba in his *Relaciones* (c. 1614) refers several times to Lerma's "melancolia que padece de ordinario" ["suffering from ordinary melancholy"]; see Cabrera de Córdoba (1857: 161), who implies that Lerma used melancholy as an excuse to get rid of his duties; see also 216, 299, and 475.

<sup>539</sup> Cabrera de Córdoba, 1857: 178.

<sup>540</sup> Verberckmoes, 1999: 49, 60.

<sup>541</sup> In the preface of *Praise of Folly* (*Moriae Encomium*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Paris, 1511), Erasmus dedicates the book to his cordial friend, Thomas More, because as he says (letter to Thomas More, Paris? 9 June 1511): "...you [Thomas More] take immense pleasure in frolics of this kind, by which I mean those that are neither crude, which I hope to be the case, nor altogether devoid of wit, and as a rule you play the part of a kind of Democritus in human life at large. Yet, though as a rule you disagree widely with vulgar opinions..."; Erasmus, 2, 1974-2011 (222): 161. The fact that Erasmus saw More as playing Democritus' role was probably because of the resemblance between their characters, as he explains in his letter to Ulrich von Hutten (Antwerp, 23 July 1519). More, writes Erasmus, is "...disposed to be merry rather than serious or solemn, but without a hint of the fool or the buffoon... In fact there is nothing in human life to which he

(1493-1540) in his *De Anima et Vita* similarly argues that laughter should be controlled and reasonable. Consequently, he condemns the “excessive outbursts that shake the entire body”.<sup>542</sup> Interestingly, while Baldassare Castiglione defines laughter as “the sign of a certain inward hilarity of the spirit, which is naturally attracted to pleasure and desirous of rest and recreation”, he warns that the perfect courtier should be careful not to “descend to buffoonery or go beyond bounds”.<sup>543</sup> However, for further explanations of what laughter is, Castiglione refers to Democritus. In the light of the well established theories on laughter, the meaning of Democritus’ smile in Rubens’ painting could be interpreted as reflecting an optimistic point of view. Its corrective power and motivation to action perhaps suggests why Rubens preferred to associate the globe more closely with the laughing philosopher.

#### In-between bodily balance and political dissonance

Additional layers of the polyphony of the philosopher’s bodies unfold by exploring the globe in more detail. It not only links the philosophers to early modern Spanish reality, but it also addresses current socio-political issues, connoted by the structure of the painting and its interaction with the philosophers’ bodies. Europe is revealed under Heraclitus’ cloak; the Americas and the west of the Atlantic are covered by Democritus’ cloak. McGrath has rightly related the dispositions of the philosophers with the geographical context:

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cannot look for entertainment, even in most serious moments... You would think him Democritus reborn...”; Erasmus, 7, 1974-2011 (999): 17, 19. Erasmus, 2008 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1530): 15.

<sup>542</sup> Vives, 1990 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1538): 58.

<sup>543</sup> Castiglione, 1967 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1528): 155-59.

Democritus' optimism is linked with the still undiscovered New World (west of the Atlantic), and the weeping Heraclitus with war-torn Europe.<sup>544</sup>

A more detailed look at the globe, despite the dark colours and the rough design of Europe, suggests a link to contemporary political matters. Rubens used rough inscriptions; among which "ANGLIA" and "ISLAND" can be discerned (figs 52-53). England and the barely visible France set the frontiers of Rubens' globe in the south. The red dots seem to indicate the major cities, with the three subsequent dots to the west of England probably denoting Amsterdam, Antwerp and Brussels. On their left, there is an inscription, which seems to read "Netherlands". To the right of Amsterdam, one more dot locates Hamburg, while under these dots, just above the frame of the painting, a dot denotes Paris. The rest of Europe is either cut or covered by Heraclitus' black cloak. Any further attempt to trace Rubens' map becomes implausible, since it is evident that the artist was not interested in precise cartography.

It is worth noting that while the painting was aimed at a Spanish patron, the Iberian Peninsula is excised. Instead, Rubens seems to have preferred to turn Lerma's attention to England and the Netherlands, which were both in open war with Spain – coincidentally or not, Anglia is represented as a sea monster. One year after this was painted, England was to sign the *Treaty of London* (28 August 1604) with Spain, which put an end to the nineteen-year Anglo-Spanish War (1585-1604). During this time, the Netherlands were almost in the middle of the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648). In 1603, the forces of the Dutch fought the Spanish army at the Siege of Ostend (1601-1604). It was "the longest continuous siege in modern European history" and the bloodiest battle of the Eighty Years' War, which finally became, as Paul Allen has remarked, "the focal symbol of the entire

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<sup>544</sup> McGrath, 1997: II, 55.

war”.<sup>545</sup> The devastation of the siege motivated the renewal of peace talks. Rubens, a Fleming and a patriot, most probably used his painting as a means to stimulate discussion about the war.

Ostend held an enormously important strategic position, since it was the only possession of the Dutch Republic in the Habsburg Netherlands. Control of Ostend meant not only dominance over the enemy, but also control of the coast and international prestige. From the Venetians’ point of view, Ostend was clearly a matter of reputation: “The Archduke has declared that he will die rather than retire... The fall of Ostend would be a great blow to the States and to the Queen of England.”<sup>546</sup> In 1603 the Archduke was deposed by Spain owing to his failure to achieve any progress. On 28 September 1603, the general Ambrosio Spinola became *maestre de campo general* of Flanders’ army, assuming command of the Spanish forces, and on 16 September 1604 Ostend finally surrendered to the Habsburgs.<sup>547</sup> The replacement of the Archduke with Spinola was a huge humiliation for Brussels, and the great instability it caused urged the promotion campaign of the co-sovereigns.<sup>548</sup>

Ostend attracted international attention and motivated a publishing campaign which informed European audiences about the technical works of the siege and disseminated larger political writings.<sup>549</sup> The contemporary journal *Belägerung der Staat Ostende* (Cologne? 1604-1605), which Anna Simoni has explored, evidences the significance of

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<sup>545</sup> Parker, 2004 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.): xxxi. For the Siege of Ostend, see also Allen, 2000: esp. 65-76; an older, but landmark study of the Eighty Year’s War (despite its over-reliance on secondary sources; Allen, 2000: x) is provided by Motley, who gives a vivid and colourful description; 1867, IV: esp. 61-128, 181-217.

<sup>546</sup> Allen, 2000: 68.

<sup>547</sup> Parker, 2004: 102.

<sup>548</sup> See further van Wyhe (2009: 255), who discusses Christophe de Bonours’ revisionist publication of the siege of Ostend in the framework of the promotion campaign of the Archdukes. Bonour goes so far as to attribute the victory exclusively to the Archduke Albert; Bonour, 1628.

<sup>549</sup> For the internationality of Ostend, see Allen, 2004: 64; and Motley, 1867, IV: 67.



Ostend.<sup>550</sup> The worldwide interest in the siege is further indicated by the journal's several translations. Simoni provides information that the journal was translated into French (*Histoire remarquable...de ce qui c'est passé...au siege de la ville d'Ostende*, Paris, 1604), English (Edward Grimstone, *A true historie of the memorable siege of Ostend*, London, 1604), and was used by Hendrick van Haestens for his Dutch histories of the siege (1613-14).<sup>551</sup> The title-page describes the technical content of the journal: "the approaches or advances, sorties, assaults, comings and goings of the ships...various explosives and new inventions...military tricks and stratagems".<sup>552</sup> The illustration on the title-page suggests that the engravings of the journal attempted to vividly represent the violence and tactics at Ostend (fig. 54).<sup>553</sup>

Painted during the Siege of Ostend, *Democritus and Heraclitus* might be seen therefore as an attempt to draw the attention of Lerma to the catastrophic consequences of the war. Lerma's unprecedented power certainly played a role. It is important to note that Lerma was the *privado* of Philip III (from 1599 to 1618) and holder of significant offices. He became *caballerizo mayor*, *sumiller de corps*, and in 1603 was appointed general of the Spanish cavalry. Therefore, when Rubens arrived in Valladolid, the duke had reached the apogee of his power, visually expressed by his enormous art collection and his wide patronage of religious institutions.<sup>554</sup> So much power, unprecedented for a favourite, had been concentrated in Lerma's hands, that as Fray Jerónimo de Sepúlveda noted: "It is thus

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<sup>550</sup> Simoni, 2003.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

<sup>552</sup> 'University of Glasgow, Special Collections, *Belägerung der Statt Ostende*', <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/mar2004.html> (accessed 10 February 2012).

<sup>553</sup> The interest in the technical part of the siege is further testified by a drawing by P. Giustiniano in *Delle Guerre de Fiandra*, libri VI (Antwerp, 1609), which depicts the machines developed by Pompeo Targone and G. Gamurini for the battle. John Lothrop Motley (1867, IV: 67) was therefore right to characterise Ostend as a "sanguinary high-school" and "a great academy in which the science and the art of war were to be taught by the most skilful practitioners to all Europe".

<sup>554</sup> For Lerma as a religious patron, see Banner, 2009; for Lerma as a collector, see Schroth, 2008 and 1990.

not a surprise that the populace is saying that Lerma has bewitched Philip III!”<sup>555</sup> Rubens was well aware of Lerma’s power, which he later criticised in a letter to Jacques Dupuy, saying that “it is difficult to conduct affairs in a country where a single man has the power and where the King is only a figure-head; or one can say quod agat magistrum admissionum ad cardinalem” (“where he serves as Chief Marshal to the Cardinal”).<sup>556</sup>

By painting Heraclitus as lamenting over the globe, Rubens does not simply express with delicacy his personal opinion for peace, as a Fleming. He also articulates the opinion held by many of the king’s counsellors and ministers, who advised Philip III and Lerma to restore peace in order for the Spanish Empire to consolidate economic stability. Indicative is the case of the Spanish scholar Baltasar Alamos de Barrientos, who in his *Norte de Principes* (c. 1600) advises Lerma to recommend Philip III to end all conflicts, restore peace in the Low Countries, and preserve peace with France.<sup>557</sup>

On the other hand, Democritus’ optimism can be justified by the discoveries of the New World, including the monopoly of the Spanish Crown in these lands, the spice trade, the commerce of minerals, new medicines, plants, animals and numerous other goods, and the broader enthusiasm for the discovery of new lands and European pride in scientific achievement.<sup>558</sup> The depiction of the globe would have flattered the duke and the Spanish court by subtly recalling the discovery of America by Christophorus Columbus in 1492 for the king of Castile, which laid the basis for the Spanish colonisation of the Americas and their “mission” to civilise and Christianise the New World according to the model of the

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<sup>555</sup> Sepúlveda, 1924: 202; qt. after Feros, 2000: 63.

<sup>556</sup> Rubens, 1955, letter 92 (22 October 1626): 149; trans. by Magurn. Rubens in the same letter recounts that while he was in Spain, an Italian gentleman asked the king for an audience. When the king referred him to the duke, the man answered: “But if I had been able to have an audience with the Duke...I should not have come to Your Majesty.”

<sup>557</sup> Pérez, 1969: 96-97; although the book names as its author Antonio Pérez, it is widely believed nowadays that the author was Alamos de Barrientos.

<sup>558</sup> See e.g. Barrera, 2001; Pagden, 1993: esp. ch. 3; Elliott, 1984; Cook, 2007: 210-11.

Old.<sup>559</sup> The duke of Lerma might have interpreted the globe as supporting the imperial dimension of Spanish rule and its ongoing geographical expansion. In this regard, the painting encapsulates the motto of Charles V – *Plus Ultra* – which was inscribed on the pillar of Hercules and which came to symbolise worldwide Spanish dominion.<sup>560</sup> Therefore, my argument for the flexibility of the painting and its polyphony of meanings becomes clearer. *Democritus and Heraclitus* subtly and without offending criticises Spanish foreign policy.

Consequently, human bodily constitutions and the geographical parts of the world interweave and subtly correlate Europe with the saturnine Heraclitus, and the Americas with the merry Democritus. Heraclitus unifies into one body with gloomy Europe; Democritus' cheerfulness combines with the New World. Simultaneously these two entities interfere with each other. The philosophers' bodies therefore function as lenses through which larger entities can be understood. However, the reverse also holds true. As the next section shows, the exploration of the macrocosm can offer a better understanding of the microcosmic human body.

#### Painting as the eye of cartography and philosophy

A look at the relationship between the philosophers and the globe within the broader framework of philosophy and cartography can offer further insights into the interpretation of *Democritus and Heraclitus*. During the sixteenth century mapping saw a significant development, with the Iberian Peninsula becoming a centre of cartography, although the

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<sup>559</sup> Pagden, 1993.

<sup>560</sup> Elliott, 1984: 287.

publication process took place in Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>561</sup> The Spanish kings were great enthusiasts of cartography and significantly encouraged the making and use of maps for civil administration, military purposes and colonisation ventures.<sup>562</sup> Maps also served diplomatic purposes as both appropriate gifts and objects of espionage which provided geographical information, while owning a map was a symbol of power and learning.<sup>563</sup> *Democritus and Heraclitus*, with its representation of the globe, therefore probably attracted the attention of the king and the cartographic interests of the Spanish courtiers, and/or advertised Rubens' erudition and intellectual curiosity.

Furthermore, the globe in conjunction with the philosophers prompts a philosophical consideration of Rubens' mapmaking. To illuminate this point, I wish to draw attention to Ortelius' *Theatrum*. The following discussion will make clear that maps and globes could be appropriate material to stimulate contemplation of the natural order and the proper judgment of human affairs. The *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* was first published in Antwerp in 1570 by Abraham Ortelius (1527-98) and signalled the genesis of the "modern atlas".<sup>564</sup> *Theatrum* met with great popularity and was widely disseminated, with several translations and editions.<sup>565</sup> Both the Plantin Journal and Albert's inventory of his library clearly testify to Rubens' interest in the *Theatrum*.<sup>566</sup> Beginning as an illuminator of maps, Ortelius later became royal geographer to Philip II to whom he dedicated his *Theatrum*.<sup>567</sup> In 1603 Ortelius' *Theatrum* was republished in Antwerp by Jan Baptist Vrients with an engraving

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<sup>561</sup> Buisseret, 2003: 56-61, 89, 111.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid: 56-61, 82-92; Parker, 1992: 124-52.

<sup>563</sup> Barber, 2011; see esp. 16-17, 21 for Charles V's giving of maps. For this, see also Buisseret, 2003: 56.

<sup>564</sup> The contribution of the *Theatrum* to early modern cartography lies mainly in the large compilation of maps in a book of single format. See Besse, 2009; and van der Krogt, 1998: 55-78.

<sup>565</sup> For the editions, see Koeman, 1967-71; and van den Broecke, 1996.

<sup>566</sup> Arents, 2001: 148-149 (E37, E38), 346 (8kol.1), 348 (10kol.2).

<sup>567</sup> For the communication of Ortelius with Spanish ministers and humanists in order to correct and revise the map of Spain, see Parker, 1992: 127.

of the arms of Philip II of Spain on the verso of the title-page. The *Theatrum* constitutes an impressive achievement, bringing together image and text, science, aesthetics and philosophy.<sup>568</sup> For the purposes of the present discussion, I wish to focus on the texts accompanying the *Image of the Countries of the World* (TYPVS ORBIS TERRARVM; first published in the German edition of 1589; fig. 55). As Lucia Nuti has persuasively argued, the four medallions in the image with quotations from Cicero and Seneca suggest the map “as an emblem of Stoic principles”, which “invite contemplation of God’s world.”<sup>569</sup>

The five Stoic mottos instruct the “reader” (designated as such by Ortelius) that looking at the images should be accompanied by a contemplation of the world. The central quotation, from Cicero – “QVID EI POTEST VIDERI MAGNUM IN REBUS HUMANIS, CUI ÆTERNITAS OMNIS, TOTIVSQVE MUNDI NOTA SIT MAGNITUDO. CICERO” (“For what can seem of moment in human occurrences to a man who keeps all eternity before his eyes and knows the vastness of the universe? Cicero”) – emphasises that human affairs are much inferior to the vastness of the universe (fig. 56).<sup>570</sup> By comparing the ephemeral and trivial nature of human troubles to the timelessness and immensity of the universe, the reader of the *Theatrum* should properly evaluate human affairs with reason and thus preserve constancy and calmness without being overcome by passions. The engagement between seeing the map and considering larger truths is further encouraged by the text in the top right medallion: “EQVVS/ VEHENDI/ CAUSA, ARANDI/ BOS, VENANDI/ ET CVSTODIENDI/ CANIS, HOMO AV/TEM ORTVS AD/ MVNDVM CON/TEMPLANDVM. Cicero” (“The horse for

<sup>568</sup> For an analysis of the title page of the *Theatrum*, see Neumann, 2009.

<sup>569</sup> Nuti, 2003: qt. 38, 46.

<sup>570</sup> Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*: IV, 17, 37; trans. King, 1966.

riding, the ox for ploughing, the dog for hunting and keeping guard; man himself however came into existence for the purpose of contemplating and imitating the world. Cicero”).<sup>571</sup> The virtue of contemplation is praised here as differentiating human beings from animals and as being the ontological purpose of human life. Cicero elaborates in the text from which the extract is drawn that contemplating the world, which is virtuous, wise, perfect and divine, helps man to improve himself and reach perfection. Ortelius thus encourages the reader to not merely look at the map with his eyes, as the organs of vision. More importantly, as the contemporary English translation of the epitome of the *Theatrum* puts it, he needs “to consider & contemplate with the eyes of his understanding the disposition of the whole world.”<sup>572</sup>

Since contemplation of the world can make man perfect, he is obliged to work for the world’s preservation and protection. This is conveyed by Cicero’s top left medallion: “HOMI|NES HAC LEGE | SVNT GENERATI, | QUI TVERENTVR | ILLVM GLOBVM, | QVEM IN HOC TEM|PLO MEDIVM VI|DES, QUÆ TER|RA DICITVR. Cicero” (“For man was given life that he might inhabit that sphere called Earth, which you see in the centre of this temple. Cicero”).<sup>573</sup> This enhances a parallel textual and visual interpretation with the verb “video” establishing a direct link between the ancient quotations and the image of the earth. The duty of man to protect the earth is in conflict with human wars, glory and power. The bottom left medallion explicitly criticises the absurdity of human goals and further addresses the inferiority of mortal boundaries compared to those of the universe. Seneca writes that the philosopher asks himself: “HOC/ EST PVNCTVM,/ QVOD INTER TOT/ GENTES FERRO/ ET IGNI DIVI|DITVR. O QVAM RIDI/CVLI

<sup>571</sup> Cicero, *Natura Deorum*: bk II, XIV, 37; trans. Rackham, 1933.

<sup>572</sup> Ortelius, 1601: 1.

<sup>573</sup> Cicero, *De re publica*, bk 6.15; trans. Walker Keyes, 1970.

SVNT MOR/TALIVM TER/MINI. Seneca” (“Is this the plot that so many tribes portion out by fire and sword? How ludicrous are their frontiers!”).<sup>574</sup>

Before writing this passage in his *Naturales quaestiones*, Seneca underlines that the ridiculousness of human trifles can be realised only with an exploration of the universe. Thus, he instructs the reader to distance himself and view the world from above: “How despicable a creature is man, unless he rise above the earth!...From above, one can now look down upon this narrow world, covered for the most part by sea, and, even where it rises above the sea, an ugly waste either parched or frozen.”<sup>575</sup> By adopting a detached attitude to worldly affairs, man will be able to free himself from his passions. Besides suggesting a way of viewing Ortelius’ map, Seneca’s diachronic perspective hints at the early modern ravages of war, which are further implied by the extensive quotation from Pliny on the verso of the page. In this, Pliny addresses the stupidity of civil wars, slaughter, glory, wealth, avarice and power by further highlighting the smallness of the earth within the whole universe.<sup>576</sup>

Lastly, Seneca’s bottom right quotation explicitly establishes the philosophical content of the *Theatrum*: “VTINAM/ QVEMADMO/DVM VNIVERSA/ MVNDI FACIES/ IN CONSPECTVM/ VENIT, ITA PHI/LOSOPHIA TOTA/ NOBIS POSSET/ OCCVRRERE. Seneca” (“I only wish that philosophy might come before our eyes in all her unity, just as the whole expanse of the firmament is spread out for us to gaze upon! Seneca”).<sup>577</sup> Just as the physical cosmos is visible to human eyes, so Seneca wishes for philosophy to be

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<sup>574</sup> Seneca, *Naturales quaestiones*: I, preface, 6; trans. Clarke <http://naturalesquaestiones.blogspot.co.uk/2009/08/book-i-tr-john-clarke.html>.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid.: I, preface, 4-6.

<sup>576</sup> Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*: II, 68, 174-75. For a transcription and translation of Ortelius’ quotation see Nuti, 2003: 53. Pliny’s words were already quoted in the 1570 edition.

<sup>577</sup> Seneca, *Ad Lucillum epistulae morales*: ep. LXXXIX, 1; trans. Gummere, 1962.

revealed to humans. In a similar vein to the other quotations, it suggests that contemplating the world can provide man with a better understanding of broader truths. Philosophy should be understood here as giving access to the *megas kosmos* and the divine laws. In the same letter from which this excerpt comes, Seneca explains that by studying philosophy in parts, one can finally reach understanding of the whole. Hence, the holistic understanding of philosophy will bring the proper re-evaluation of human things. Ortelius' *Image of the World* therefore invites the reader and observer to become a contemplator and to use the parts of the worlds as *mikroi kosmoi* in order to ascend to higher macrocosmic steps of virtue and perfection. The relationship of cartography with philosophy should not surprise us when we consider the loose boundaries between the early modern sciences and humanities. Nevertheless, the extensive use of Stoic mottos in Ortelius' map is largely explained by his humanistic background, Neostoical influences and his friendship with Justus Lipsius.<sup>578</sup> Indeed, Ortelius was more a humanist and antiquarian than a cartographer.<sup>579</sup>

Rubens' painting was created in a period when he was clearly under the influence of Neostoicism and Justus Lipsius.<sup>580</sup> While for Ortelius the eye of philosophy is geography, as Nuti remarked, for Rubens it is painting that provides an insight into philosophy and cosmography. Democritus and Heraclitus rise above the world, as Seneca advised, and look at the smallness of humanity from a superior point of view.<sup>581</sup> Their detached attitude makes them think more clearly about the triviality and foolishness of human goals and

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<sup>578</sup> Papy, 2004a; Depuydt, 1999.

<sup>579</sup> For Ortelius' cultural background, see van den Broecke, van der Krogt and Meurer (eds), 1998; Karrow *et al.* (eds), 1998; for Ortelius' collection, see Büttner, 1998: 169–80. See also Meganck, 2003.

<sup>580</sup> Morford, 1991; Reeves, 1997.

<sup>581</sup> It is noteworthy that while in Rubens' painting, the philosophers are placed higher than the globe, Bramante had earlier depicted them at the same height with the globe between them. For Bramante's *Democritus and Heraclitus* (1487, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan), see Kiang, 1988.



deeds. By contemplating broader natural and divine laws, they transcend the mortal boundaries of space and time. The contemporary globe relates them to current matters and socio-political affairs of the European stage. They criticise and instruct in contemporary matters: the stupidity of wars, the vanity of power, riches and glory, and human avarice. Thus, it might be said that Rubens presents them in an early modern European, or even Spanish guise given their popularity in Spain and especially in Spanish literature as discussed earlier.

The Stoic interpretation of the subject is further supported by the suggested preference for Democritus' laughter. Not only had Seneca clearly denoted, in his *De Tranquillitate Animi*, his preference for Democritus' attitude, but Neostoicism in general further reinforced sympathy towards Democritus. Johan Verberckmoes, in his discussion of Puteanus' speech on Democritus, looks at the philosopher as "a perfect example of christian stoic philosophy's attempts in the early seventeenth century to rehabilitate laughter as a positive force".<sup>582</sup> Democritus, in a Neostoic disguise, laughs because humans have "libre eleccion", "free will" to make the right choice, and yet they choose their own misfortunes.<sup>583</sup>

Democritus and Heraclitus might further recall the Stoic belief that the world is constructed according to a reasoned order, in which everybody has a role to accomplish. The Spanish mission to protect the world and expand Christianity is recalled, I believe, with the hand gestures of the philosophers. With his right hand Democritus protectively

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<sup>582</sup> Verberckmoes, 1999: 173. In this respect, laughter is seen as reflecting the Neostoic objectives of "a serene soul...inner peace and tranquility". For the popularity of Neostoicism in Spain and the influence of Lipsius in early modern statecraft, see Corbett, 1975; and, the more general study of Oestreich, 1982.

<sup>583</sup> This is explicitly supported by both Argensola's and López de Vega's texts discussed above. Argensola explains that Democritus laughed because "los siniestros sucesos del hombre en él no son forzosos, sino voluntarios, y esto basta para justificar mi risa"; Argensola, 1889: 156; trans. "the disastrous events of men are not forced, but voluntary, and this is enough to justify my laugh".

touches the globe, recalling Cicero's advice to peoples to protect the earth. The enigmatic gesture of his left hand points towards Heraclitus' hands. Interestingly, Heraclitus' wringing hands, as McGrath has noticed, do not adopt the characteristic melancholic pose (of cheek resting on hand), as seen for example in Dürer's *Melencolia I* (1514, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; fig. 57).<sup>584</sup> Instead, they resemble praying hands, suggesting Heraclitus' entreaties for humanity. Given the current ravaging of wars and the climax of the Siege of Ostend, it is tempting to think that the philosopher prays for the end of warfare.

One could go one step further and suggest that Democritus' hand gesture links Heraclitus' praying hands to the celestial sphere and the invisible heavens above. The gesture unites mortal borders with the vastness of the universe as well as with divine omnipotence. It does not simply articulate hope for the end of the war – further supported by the oak tree behind the philosophers, a symbol of strength and robustness according to Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* – but subtly reminds the king, the duke and the Spanish audience about the limits of human power, which derives from God.<sup>585</sup> The importance of the “grace of God” for Spanish rulers, ordained by God, is evidenced by Charles V's instruction to his son, Philip II: “as principal and firm foundation of your governance you must acknowledge God's magnanimity, and submit your actions and desires to His will.”<sup>586</sup>

We might therefore see the painting as being structured on three perceptual levels with multiple interpretations: from the human body to the earth, and from the earth to the divine

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<sup>584</sup> McGrath, 1997: II, 55. McGrath, nevertheless, has viewed Democritus' hand as making a “mocking gesture at his companion, implying thus a rejection of his attitude.”

<sup>585</sup> Ripa, 1709: 32. To stand like an oak tree in the wind was an appropriate metaphor for those afflicted by war; Ferraro Parmelee, 1994: 4.

<sup>586</sup> Qt. Fernández-Santamaria, 1983: 239. For this concept, see further Davies, 1998.

sphere. These three layers unfold, interact and interweave. The human body constitutes, and is constitutive of, these inner frictions of the chain. From the *mikros kosmos* of the body, to the *kosmos* of the earth and finally to the *megas kosmos*, the chain is ordered by several more subsequent and interdependent layers, *kosmoi* or bodies and each one should accomplish its role. The body politic holds a significant role in this chain with the king as its head and the representative of God on earth.<sup>587</sup> The king's body, as Carlos Eire puts it, "was the temporal embodiment of an eternal monarchy".<sup>588</sup> As the personification of God, the head of the mystic body, the king's natural body was presented as "a divine sovereign", as Joanna Woodall has clearly shown, and as being in perfect humoral balance.<sup>589</sup> It achieves *eukrasia* or, as Juan Huarte de San Juan puts it, "supreme perfection".<sup>590</sup> For the harmony of the polity to be preserved, the head must be healthy. To this effect, the regulation of the modesty and temperance of the royal body was significantly practised.<sup>591</sup> Acting as a representative of God on earth, the king had the responsibility to harmonise his body. However, that balance is challenged by the humoral imbalance of Democritus and

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<sup>587</sup> For the traditional concept of the "body politic", see Kantorowicz, 1957. With particular reference to the body of the Spanish king, see Davies, 1998: esp. 15, fn. 37.

<sup>588</sup> Eire, 1995: 341.

<sup>589</sup> Woodall, 2007: 342.

<sup>590</sup> Huarte, 1977: ch. 4; qt. after Feros, 2000: 74. On how the authority of the king's body is promoted in portraiture through bodily balance, modesty and temperance, see indicatively Davies, 1998; on how the portrayed familial bonds strengthened the wider political body, see van Wyhe, 2011b.

<sup>591</sup> For example, the Venetian ambassador to Spain, Michel Suriano, informs us that Philip II was on a well-regulated diet, even though "vive...moderatamente" ("to live moderately") for the Spanish king meant exclusively eating meat and an abstinence from fruit, vegetables and fish; Gashard, 1856: 128, 254. While Philip's diet is described as modest, exclusively eating meat was regarded as unhealthy by the medical world, which advised avoidance of an excess of meat. While there were studies which encouraged a great consumption of meat, such as *KPEΩΦΑΓΙΑ sive de esu carniū* or *Meat-Eating* (1626) by the professor of Greek in Louvain Petrus Castellanus, these look more exceptional than the norm. As addressed in chapter 1, Ludovicus Nonnius, in his innovative *Ichthyophagia* (1616), emphasised the nutritional value of fish, fruit and vegetables and supported moderation in meat-eating. There were also physicians and educationalists who advocated abstinence from meat. However, meat was perceived as important for the human diet and abstinence from it was unhealthy. The nutritional value of meat-eating was based on the rationale that the body can better assimilate foods similar to it. Nonetheless, a frugal diet cannot be clearly defined and much depended on personal preferences. This is indicated by the fact that for Rubens, as mentioned in chapter 1, and contrary to Philip II, restriction of meat-eating was part of a modest diet.

Heraclitus, which questions by implication the imbalance of the body politic. Thus, Lerma is invited to take the role of a physician and cure political diseases and instabilities.

Lerma has a vital role in the body politic, since the counsellors of the king are perceived as his bodily members. As Antonio Feros puts it, the counsellors are the king's "understanding, memory, eyes, ears, voice, feet, and hands", or, as Pedro de Ribadeneira said, "the soul, the reason, and the wisdom of the commonwealth".<sup>592</sup> Feros continues by quoting the Spanish humanist Fadrique Furió Ceriol: "for the people" the king's counsellors were "father, tutor and curator [and] both the king and the counselors are God's vicars upon earth".<sup>593</sup> The anatomical understanding of the king's and the counsellors' bodies is avidly demonstrated in Lerma's reputation as being the "image and likeness" of Philip III and "a mirror image of the king himself".<sup>594</sup> In this light, Democritus' and Heraclitus' hand gestures can be interpreted as intending to remind Lerma about his vital role in relation to the king's body and his commitment to act for the balance of the body politic according to God's will.

The philosophers could therefore well recall Lerma's duty to be "a wise gentleman", such as López de Vega described in his *El perfecto señor* (1626). In this work, the prototype of the wise man, which is addressed by López de Vega's *Heráclito y Demócrito*, is discussed in more detail with Neostoic repercussions.<sup>595</sup> According to López de Vega,

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<sup>592</sup> Feros, 2000: 25.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid.: 91-109. Feros (1995) also discusses the portraits of Philip III and Lerma by Juan Pantoja de la Cruz as "twin" images.

<sup>595</sup> López de Vega, 1653; a copy of *El perfecto señor* is also testified in the Torre Alta Library of Alcazar, see Bouza, 2005, [26-56]: 373. For *El perfecto señor*, see Acquier, 1995. For Stoicism and López de Vega's *Heráclito y Demócrito*, see Robbins, 2001.

our active Philosopher, will, then, be a man who is civil, regal, not bedecked with arrogance, and who displays moral virtue and erudition of a useful sort; one who, in his dealings with the world is free from its deceptions, aiming to conduct himself with proper ease...whose blood is adorned with personal virtues...who knows himself, who knows the world and the most useful things the life of a human being can provide, and who, in light of this knowledge, shunning vain and impertinent concerns, desires what is proper and chooses the fitting means for its acquisition.<sup>596</sup>

Similarly, Rubens' painting might have aimed at motivating Lerma to conform to his fundamental political role as an "active philosopher" and adviser to the king. *Democritus and Heraclitus* invites Lerma to contemplate the world "free from its deceptions" and to proceed to his affairs with virtue and proper judgment. It also shows to Lerma that knowledge of the self and the world, the better understanding of the one through the other, and the proper evaluation of human affairs is what can elevate him to be a *perfecto señor*. I have argued here that *Democritus and Heraclitus* suggests contemplation of the natural order as a means to properly consider contemporary matters and vital issues of peace and war. By taking account of philosophy and cartography, painting is therefore presented here as a means to improve and transform Lerma and the Spanish audience. In the next section, the eloquence of physiology is suggested as a further powerful means of persuasion.

#### The painterly eloquence of the passions and the transformative power of painting

The physiological rendering of the philosophers' bodies, as shown earlier, broadened the interpretive framework of the painting and encouraged interesting connections to be made

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<sup>596</sup> López de Vega, 1641: 50, 60; qt. after Bouza, 2007: 223.

with Rubens' own times. I will now attempt to gain insight into their emotions and into how the persuasiveness of the painting is reinforced, by turning again to physiology. Passions and emotions were considered by art theoreticians to be the "kernel and soul of art" ("kern en ziel van de kunst"), and according to early modern rhetorical theory, "the strongest form of persuasion".<sup>597</sup> For a good painter rhetorical skills were as necessary as they were seen to be for the diplomat and ambassador, who were often called orators.<sup>598</sup>

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, like philosophy and rhetoric, painting had the power, according to Plutarch as cited by Junius, to move the affections through the eloquence of "*forcible figures and lively colours*". Quintilian praises the inventiveness of the painter in depicting feelings and encourages the use of visual aids as a means of enforcing persuasiveness.<sup>599</sup> The persuasive force of painting is part of a frequently discussed topic in early modern art treatises – namely, that the artist has the capacity to move the beholder by depicting a subject's emotional state.<sup>600</sup> The movement of the soul which a successful depiction should achieve, as discussed for example by Alberti, should be understood as a holistic bodily reaction of the beholder.<sup>601</sup> Thijs Weststeijn has convincingly argued that the persuasive force of the depicted figures does not simply arouse the sympathy and emotional responses of the beholder, but makes him or her experience the virtual reality of the painting.<sup>602</sup> "Taken to the extreme," Weststeijn argues,

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<sup>597</sup> Van Mander, 1603-1604, ch. VI: 55f., 27<sup>r</sup>; qt. after Weststeijn, 2010: 262; Melion, 1991: 23-24.

<sup>598</sup> Gentili, 1924 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1585): 135; Anderson, 1993: 12.

<sup>599</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*: bk II, XIII, 12-13 and bk VI, I, 31-33.

<sup>600</sup> Weststeijn, 2008: esp. 171-218; 2010.

<sup>601</sup> Alberti, 1956, bk II, 49: 74.

<sup>602</sup> Weststeijn, 2008. This is a key argument supported by Weststeijn's study; see indicatively 171, 197, 215, 357.

“this means that the beholder is expected to ‘become’ the work, as ultimately he takes on the work’s qualities”.<sup>603</sup>

The deep involvement of the beholder with the reality of a painting can be better understood if the essence of humoral theory is recalled. The perception of the body as a psychosomatic unity inextricably links bodily, mental and spiritual processes. This interdependence means that the movement of the passions can induce a holistic movement of the self, and therefore transform thinking, judgment and character. Thus, Aristotle remarks in his *Rhetoric* that persuasion and a change of character can be achieved by stirring the proper emotions, since “the Emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments”.<sup>604</sup>

For a better understanding of the beholder’s transformation through painting, it suffices here to recall the process of image-making, which was described in chapter 2 in relation to the painter. Sensory stimulation is the first step required for the artist to record the external images in his mind. Through it, further processes and refinement produce an inner image that will be externalised and recorded in an external, tangible medium. In a similar way, the beholder, having his/her senses stirred by that external stimulus-painting, internalises the image and through mental processes a new image is created. In this process, the fundamental difference between painter and spectator lies in their relation to the image, which requires the artist to be moved *before* and *during* the conception process and execution of the image, while the spectator is to be moved *by* the image. However, the movement of the beholder requires that the artist first be moved himself. As Junius vividly remarks:

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<sup>603</sup> Ibid.: 209.

<sup>604</sup> Aristotle, 1954, trans. W. Rhys Roberts: II, 1.

to moove the spectator with his worke after it is finished, had need first to be mooved himself, when he goeth about to conceive and to expresse his intended worke. A minde rightly affected and passionate is the only fountaine whereout there doe issue forth such violent streames of passions; that the spectator, not being able to resist, is carried away against his will, whithersoever the force of such Imperious Art listeth to drive him.<sup>605</sup>

An interactive relationship runs between painter-medium-beholder, with the beholder being manipulated and finally transformed. This power of painting to transform the beholder evidences the beneficence of painting to the human constitution and elevates the painter to the status not only of *pathopoios*, but also *ethopoios* – the artist not only moulds the passions of the beholder, but also the character. Whereas the painter as *pathopoios* needs to firstly move himself in order to emotionally move the audience, as *ethopoios* he needs to assume the character and morals which he attempts to shape in the beholder. As Aristotle explains, the orator must “make his own character look right and put his hearers, who are to decide, into the right frame of mind”.<sup>606</sup> This leads back to the Renaissance motto that “every painter paints himself”.<sup>607</sup> Therefore, painting does not only constitute a forum for intercourse between the artist and the beholder, but also encourages the beholder to adapt his or her emotions and character to those of the artist – in other words, to shape the self of the beholder according to that of the artist. By stirring the senses, therefore, and maximising the visual experience, painting can subtly fulfil the purposes of a diplomatic tool with greater persuasive force than textual language.

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<sup>605</sup> Junius, 1638: bk. III, ch. IV, 299-300.

<sup>606</sup> Aristotle, 1954, trans. Rhys Roberts: II, 1.

<sup>607</sup> For the motto, see ch. 2: 97-98; and ch. 3: 159-160.



In the light of this discussion, the meticulous rendering of the physical constitutions of Democritus and Heraclitus is a means of enforcing the persuasive power of the painting. The philosophers visualise Horace's popular motto: "si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi" ("as the human face smiles at a smile, so it echoes/ Those who weep: if you want to move me to tears/ You must first grieve yourself").<sup>608</sup> The power of the visual representation of laughing and weeping is well illustrated by a sonnet of Argensola's, dated to the first decade of the seventeenth century:

De los dos sabios son estos retratos,  
Nuño, que con igual filosofia,  
Iloraua el uno, el otro se reia  
del vano error del mundo y de sus tratos.

Mirando el cuadro, pienso algunos ratos,  
Si hubiese de dexar mi mediania  
a cuál de los extremos seguiria  
destos dos celebrados mentecatos.

Tú, que de gravedad eres amigo,  
juzgarás que es mejor juntarse al coro  
que a lágrimas provoca en la tragedia.

Pero yo, como sé que nunca el lloro

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<sup>608</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 3.99-102; trans. Kline, 2005: 101-103.

nos restituye el bien, ni el mal remedia,  
con tu licencia, el de la risa sigo.

(Those portraits of the two wise men,  
Nuno, with the same philosophy,  
the one cried, the other one laughed  
at the vain mistake of the world and its traits.

Looking at the painting, sometimes I think,  
if I had to leave my mediocrity  
which of the extremes I would follow  
of those celebrated silly famous men.

You, that you are a very good friend,  
would judge that it is better to join the chorus  
of that which provokes tears in tragedy.

But I, as I know that crying  
is neither good nor remedy for the evils,  
with your licence I follow the one who laughs.)<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> Argensola, 1950, II: 226; qt. after García Gómez, 1984: 155-56, 185. García Gómez notes that the sonnet is found in three manuscripts. In two of them it is entitled “A un quadro en que estauan retratados Heráclito y Demócrito”, while in the third MS it appears with a different title: “A los retratos de aquellos dos filósofos Heráclito y Demócrito, de los quales, aquél continuamente andaba llorando los males del mundo, y éste, por el contrario, riéndose de ellos”. The first title suggests that the painting was one double portrait, while the second one indicates two different portraits, one with Heraclitus and the other with Democritus. However, as García Gómez argues persuasively, the word “cuadro” shows that the case was

The sonnet, dedicated to Don Nuño de Mendoza, describes a portrait of the two philosophers as laughing and weeping because of the errors of humankind. The emotional state of the philosophers affects Argensola, who is moved to consider their different constitutions and take a position. Argensola argues that both laughing and weeping are extremes, and instead he prefers a balance between them. Nonetheless, if he had to choose, he would prefer laughing, in contrast to Mendoza's preference for weeping, because weeping is never restorative.

The adaptability of painting to its audience was much praised by early modern art treatises. For example, Dutch art theoretician and artist Samuel van Hoogstraten explains the importance of the flexibility of a painting's subject matter in persuading a broad audience: "those with cheerful temperaments will want to hear a different mode of speech from those who are melancholic or earnest".<sup>610</sup> In Rubens' *Democritus and Heraclitus*, the emotional diversity of the philosophers and the polyphony of the painting's meanings widen the interpretative framework. This broadens its audience appeal and esteem. By bringing together the ancient philosophers and the early modern globe, *Democritus and Heraclitus* offers multiple meanings: it delights, instructs and moves.

In conclusion, an insight into the physiological constitution of the philosophers has enriched the interpretative framework of the painting. I have argued that the depiction of inner and outer physicality does not simply accentuate the talent of the painter in constructing the human body. More importantly, the physiological rendering enriches the

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most probably of a single painting. The first heading is evidenced in the MSS: MS 4097, fol. 143, Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid; and MS, fol. 86 Biblioteca del Seminario de Vitoria. The second heading is found in: MS 4141, p. 413, Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

<sup>610</sup> Van Hoogstraten, 1657: 77-76; "[D]ie vreugdig van gemoedt zijn, willen een andere tael hebben, als die swaermoedig of ernstig zijn", qt. after Weststeijn, 2008: 69, 372, fn. 246.

eloquence, polyphony and subjectivity of the painting. The depiction of bodily and mental movements enlivens the painted human body with inner kinetic energy, and interacts with the energy of the outward beholder. This virtual experience enraptures the beholder, provokes and manipulates emotions, and leads to a character transformation. Furthermore, drawing on the interface between painting, medicine, cartography and philosophy, I have argued that a reciprocal relationship lies between the body of the philosophers and the body politic, with both constituting each other. The bodily imbalance of the polity was suggested as being not metaphorical but ontological – a point which is further argued in the next chapter. Democritus' and Heraclitus' temperaments constitute, and are constituted by, larger socio-political and macrocosmic entities. The rendering of the constitutive relationship between these entities and the human body argues with suppleness for harmony, balance and stability with regard to the current political matters of peace and war.

Painting is thus an active agent capable of political argumentation. It can be used successfully as a diplomatic tool and can move to action. However, since visual rendering significantly diverges from verbal rendering, images cannot be seen as speech but rather as an alternative medium. Visual representation takes advantage of the flexibility and subjectivity which the new, inner context of the image creates. The polyphony of meanings, which is often desired, avoids conflicts, especially when combined with an amusing topic, such as *Democritus and Heraclitus* (to which Rubens returned later in his life).<sup>611</sup> However, the multiplicity of images and the multi-layered complex of meanings might also suggest the limitations of the use of visual material in diplomacy. This becomes

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<sup>611</sup> Rubens painted full-length pendant portraits of the philosophers for the hunting lodge of Philip IV, Torre della Parada (1636-38, Museo del Prado). For the decoration of the Torre, see Georgievska-Shine and Silver, 2014. For an earlier study focused on Rubens and Torre, see Alpers, 1971.

clearer when considering that the speaking style of an early modern ambassador was expected to be “simple, without embellishment, figures, or ornamentation”, “not verbose or discursive, but compact and clear”.<sup>612</sup>

The eloquence of *Democritus and Heraclitus* has suggested the painter as a physician and surgeon, building and constructing the human body with his brush and paint. It has also rendered the artist as a *pathopoios* and *ethopoios* enlivening his painted bodies with passions and character, and through that moulding and transforming the outer viewer of the painting. Furthermore, as a political orator, the painter uses visual language to persuade the audience about socio-political matters. Finally, as a *perfecto señor*, an active philosopher and contemplator, the artist encompasses the entire world in the painting – namely, the microcosmic human body, the political body and the globe, which give access to larger macrocosmic truths. This ability suggests painting as a divine activity and the painter as being gifted with divine inspiration.

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<sup>612</sup> Gentili, 1924, trans. Gordon (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1585): 147-48.

## CHAPTER V

### COUNTER-REFORMATION MEDICINE AND NOURISHMENT:

#### RUBENS' ALTARPIECES FOR THE JESUIT CHURCH IN ANTWERP

How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Whereupon Jesus said to them, Believe me when I tell you this; you can have no life in yourselves, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood. The man who eats my flesh and drinks my blood enjoys eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, lives continually in me, and I in him.<sup>613</sup>

The Eucharistic food discloses the highest degree of spirituality in the most humble materiality. This is not merely an expression of immateriality through materiality, but an ontological transformation of the matter of bread and wine to the living but unseen flesh and blood of Christ. It is through the common but vital biological process of eating that the human unites with the divine and partakes of immortality. According to the Gospels, it was at the Last Supper that Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist by stating, after blessing the bread and wine, that this was His own body and blood. However, how the borders of materiality and spirituality, the seen and the unseen, merge and collapse at the consumption of the holy food has been a matter of great ambivalence and controversy.

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<sup>613</sup> John, 6: 53-57; 'New Advent Bible: John', <http://www.newadvent.org/bible/joh006.htm#vrs54> (accessed 18 August 2014).

During the Reformation period, the unification of the human with the divine through the living body of Christ in the chalice was greatly defended and advocated by Catholicism against Protestant attack.

The Eucharistic body of Christ constitutes the starting point of the present discussion and is explored as far as it provides a lens for a better understanding of the human body and an insight into the key concept of this chapter, the transformation of the body. By exploring the human body in relation to other sorts of bodies, such as the Eucharistic and the crucified body of Christ, the semi-divine saintly body, the bodies of angels and demons, and the larger entities of the *corpus mysticum* and the body politic, this chapter raises profound questions of *being* and *becoming*. By shedding light on the physiological understanding of the body, it has been shown so far that physicality and spirituality cannot be approached in different terms, as opposing matter to spirit, but on the contrary as a complex nexus in which material and immaterial properties mesh and interact. This chapter continues arguing along these lines, but it expands to spiritual medicine and to a dialogue with secular medicine.

By exploring Rubens' altarpieces for the Jesuit Church in Antwerp, *The Miracles of St Ignatius Loyola* and *The Miracles of St Francis Xavier* (1617, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; figs 58-59), the discussion will draw on the transformation of the body through physical and spiritual nourishment. Emphasis is given to the oscillation of the depicted human body between health and disease, fidelity and infidelity, as well as between materiality and spirituality. My argument will draw on three interrelated key points which converge on the constitution of the human body. Firstly, I will argue that the exploration of the human body as well as of the body of Christ as a psychosomatic unity beyond the

dualistic boundaries between body and soul, furthers our understanding of early modern perceptions of bodiliness and its liminality. I will address the unity of the soul and body of the Eucharistic Christ and its healing power. In the next section, my core arguments will support the contention that spiritual and physical health/disease, and by implication the health and durability of the polity, were not metaphorical but ontological, with the disease or health of the soul explicitly affecting physical stability. The last section will attempt to draw larger conclusions with regard to the transformative power of painting and the ontological transformation that the body of the beholder undergoes while viewing the canvases and interacting with the painted bodies. The previous chapter explored painting as a diplomatic tool that worked towards the manipulation of the emotions, character and judgment of the beholder. The present chapter will draw attention to the pursuit of spiritual progress through the medium of painting.

My approach therefore argues against current views of the painted body as a metaphor or sign of disease. A case in point with particular pertinence is *The Miracles of St Francis Xavier*, in which Christine Boeckl interprets the reclining man at the foreground as a heretic plague victim.<sup>614</sup> While Boeckl persuasively links disease and infidelity, she approaches the altarpiece as allegorical and disease as a metaphor or simile for heresy. The interpretation is part of her broader approach to images of plague and pestilence as representing infidelity.<sup>615</sup> In this view, disease and infidelity are not constituted by each other. With reference to this canvas, Massimo Leone has also supported a relationship between infidelity and disease, arguing that “Rubens’s representation rejects the body-soul

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<sup>614</sup> Boeckl, 1996.

<sup>615</sup> Boeckl, 2000.



dualism”.<sup>616</sup> However, Leone explores the body as a sign of the soul’s disease. Interpretations like Boeckl’s or Leone’s raise questions about the ontology of the depicted body. Is the painted body a metaphor for spirituality? Is it an unavoidable means, and the only means for the painter, to signify spirituality? Is the body a form for immaterial concepts?

The interpretation of the early modern visual body in figurative terms is indicative of both a broader lack of confidence to engage with the ontology of the materialised human body and a lack of profound understanding of the body as a psychosomatic unity. This lack of understanding does not only relate to the painted or visual body, but also expands to wider views of the early modern body. Briefly put, if our primary sources state, for example, that spiritual disease can cause physical disease, why should we understand this according to our current views and thus interpret it as a linguistic metaphor?

Besides viewing the body as an ontological manifestation of psychosomatic disease/health, I also dispense with current approaches as far as they explain the diseased body in a large, extraneous context. Boeckl, for example, grafts the diseased body into a given context which has been produced outside of the context of the canvas. Yet, as Jonathan Culler has stated, “context is not given but produced”.<sup>617</sup> The physical state of the human body cannot be explained apart from its interaction with the other bodies on the canvas, the living bodies in the church, the overall original context of the altarpieces and the Jesuit view of the human body. This is also supported by early modern physiology,

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<sup>616</sup> Leone, 2010: 478.

<sup>617</sup> Culler, 1988: preface.

which perceives the human body not as an enclosed entity but as affecting, and being affected by, the surrounding environment.

A last key point that the discussion will draw attention to is the relationship between the physical body and the body politic or *corpus mysticum*. Again, the visual exploration of this issue suffers from oversimplifying the relationship of those two bodies to representation. A case in point is the collection of essays entitled *In Sickness and in Health*, edited by Laurinda Dixon, which links the physical state of the human body in the arts with larger societal issues but only within the limits of metaphor.<sup>618</sup> My approach argues instead for an ontological and constitutive relationship between the painted body and the polity, a relationship in which both mould each other.

Despite the popularity of Rubens' Jesuit altarpieces, they have not attracted much attention in recent scholarship. Beyond Graham Smith's and Hans Vlieghe's discussions, which still provide good information on the iconography/iconology of the paintings, the most recent accounts which consider the altarpieces in a broader context are those of Massimo Leone and Willibald Sauerländer.<sup>619</sup> Leone provides a semiotic analysis of the canvases, seeing them as a means "to propagate a new idea of religious identity."<sup>620</sup> An interesting point which Leone addresses in his discussion of the *Xavier* canvas, and which is also important for the present discussion, is the richness of meanings – what Leone calls "multilayered semantics", and what I prefer to call "the polyphony of Rubens' bodies".<sup>621</sup> This multiplicity of meanings conforms also to the larger, multi-layered iconographic

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<sup>618</sup> Dixon (ed.), 2004.

<sup>619</sup> Smith, 1969; Vlieghe, 1972-73; Leone, 2010: 148-67, 471-79; Sauerländer, 2014: 78-97.

<sup>620</sup> Leone, 2010: qt. 23.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*: 474. Even more recently, Sauerländer (2014: 78-97, qt. 80) gave attention to how Rubens adapted visuality to Jesuit needs: "the proselytizing mission of a newly founded order" and the propaganda for the canonisation process of Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier.

programme of the church, which aims, as Anna Knaap has persuasively argued, at engaging its broad audience.<sup>622</sup>

The discussion below attempts to provide a close, but in no case exhaustive, analysis of the altarpieces in the light of Jesuit identity and Jesuit views on the human body and its healing processes. Whereas the selected material has been sought to be representative of Jesuit mentality, it should be kept in mind that the Jesuits were not a “monolithic organisation”, as Bireley has pointed out, and their views could differ greatly.<sup>623</sup> Whereas, therefore, I attempt to draw larger conclusions about Jesuit views of the body, this is not to say that divergent views were absent.

### Rubens and the Antwerp Jesuits

Rubens’ altarpieces function in a perfect symbiosis between architecture and Jesuit identity. When Rubens received the commission for the two altarpieces for the Jesuit Church, it was during a period of peace and prosperity for the city of Antwerp, which was also in the midst of a restoration of the Catholic faith. Having suffered from the iconoclastic outbreaks of the previous century, Antwerp, a vulnerable city close to the Protestant north, had become a cradle of Catholicism following its reconquest by Alessandro Farnese in 1585.<sup>624</sup> In four years, from 1585 to 1589, Antwerp’s population was almost halved, from 82,000 citizens to 42,000.<sup>625</sup> As stated in the treaty of surrender,

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<sup>622</sup> Knaap, 2006a.

<sup>623</sup> Bireley, 2003: 267.

<sup>624</sup> For the iconoclastic fury, see Kaptein, 2002. For art and iconoclasm in the Netherlands, see indicatively Freedberg, 1972 and 1986. For a more recent study on art after iconoclasm (1566-85), see Jonckheere and Suykerbuyk (eds), 2012; and with particular reference to Antwerp, see Jonckheere, 2012.

<sup>625</sup> Marnef, 2001: 260.

all Protestants in Antwerp had to convert to Catholicism within four years, or leave. Owing to the Protestant views of his father Jan, Rubens' family was one of those who expatriated to Cologne; the family converted to the Catholic faith and returned back to Antwerp in 1589, after Jan's death. From age twelve, therefore, Peter Paul Rubens was raised in the Roman Catholic faith.<sup>626</sup> Rubens established lively relations with the Jesuits and acted as consultant to the Jesuit College, *Sodalitas latina maior*.<sup>627</sup> The College, headed by Rubens' friend, Rector Carolus Scribani, was at the heart of a growing Jesuit culture in the Spanish Netherlands, with Antwerp at the centre of Jesuit activities.<sup>628</sup> Not only did Rubens support the Jesuits with his painterly works, but he also had a well stocked library with Jesuit books for which he designed many title-pages.<sup>629</sup> The most popular print cooperation with a Jesuit father is the book on optics by François de Aguilón (1567-1617), for which Rubens designed the title-page and six engravings and probably contributed some ideas.<sup>630</sup> Aguilón's engagement with science is indicative of the broader interests of the Jesuit fathers.<sup>631</sup> The cooperation between Rubens and Aguilón, one of the two architects of the church, might partially explain Rubens' later engagement with the architecture of the Jesuit Church and his contribution to the façade.<sup>632</sup> This is further supported by Rubens' praise of the church's architecture in the introduction of his *Palazzi di Genova*.<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> For example Roger de Piles (2005, 79) in his biography of Rubens states that the artist was so disciplined that he always started his day with Mass, unless health issues prevented him; see here ch. 2: 113.

<sup>627</sup> Büttner, 2006a: 68.

<sup>628</sup> Up until 1640, the growing Society of Jesus counted ten sodalities with 3,000 members alone in Antwerp, while the Belgian province had in total ninety sodalities and 13,727 members; Muller, 2006: 124.

<sup>629</sup> For Rubens' library, see Arents, 2001; for title-pages and book illustrations, see Judson and van de Velde, 1978.

<sup>630</sup> Aguilón: 1613; Held, 1979.

<sup>631</sup> O'Malley et al., 1999, 2006.

<sup>632</sup> Ziggelaar, 2008.

<sup>633</sup> Rubens, 1622. See further, Ottenheym, 1997; Lombaerde, 2008: 20; Lombaerde (ed.), 2002; Snaet, 2002.

The Jesuits' activities were encouraged by the joint sovereigns of the Spanish Netherlands, Archduke Albert and Infanta Isabella. Albert and Isabella's patronage of the Jesuit order constitutes part of the broader attempt to restore Catholicism in the Netherlands and secure a Catholic-Habsburg identity in every aspect of religious, political, social and cultural life.<sup>634</sup> Here patronage should be understood within the framework of the intervention of early modern monarchical states in religious matters according to "whose the region, his the religion". The Archdukes, as well as Philip IV, significantly contributed to the erection of the luxurious Jesuit Church in Antwerp, built between April 1615 and September 1621 (figs 60-62).<sup>635</sup> The church displayed the coat of arms of the Spanish king on the façade as well as above the high altar, the monograms A and Y (for Albert and Ysabel) on the apse, the coat of arms of the Archdukes on the high altar and three paintings by Rubens with their patron saints (St Albert of Liège, St Elizabeth of Hungary and St Clare of Assisi) at the entrance of the church.<sup>636</sup> The church was the result of the joined forces of the architects François de Aguilón and Pieter Huysens, Rubens, Carolus Scribani and the Superior General Acquaviva in Rome.

While the basilica ground plan was intended to express the continuity of the early Christian Church, the spacious interior, the opening up of the choir to the laity and the reduction of the side altars emphasised the high altar and enhanced participation in the sacraments.<sup>637</sup> Anna Knaap has shown that the emphasis of "the triumph of the Eucharist over its enemies" was the central theme of the thirty-nine ceiling paintings commissioned

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<sup>634</sup> See indicatively Duerloo and Werner, 1998; Thøfner, 2007; Pollmann, 2011; van Wyhe, 2011a; Duerloo, 2012.

<sup>635</sup> For the financing of the building, see Poncelet, 1926: I, 458-60.

<sup>636</sup> Thøfner, 1996: 118-19.

<sup>637</sup> Knaap, 2006b: esp. 159-60.

to Rubens' studio (the contract was signed in 1620).<sup>638</sup> Knaap argues that the paintings were meant to be read in a sequence from the entrance to the altar, but also in a multi-directional viewing.<sup>639</sup> The paintings can be seen, before the fire which destroyed them in 1718, in the panel of Pieter Neefs and Sebastian Vranex, *Interior of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp* (c. 1650, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; fig. 62). They extended to the two floors of the church and were divided into four parallel sequences of nine paintings, with three more paintings on the vaults of the narthex.<sup>640</sup> While the upper gallery was for the private use of the Jesuit fathers, the laity could view the images from the ground floor.<sup>641</sup> All these paintings were characterised by "actio" and movement, leading towards Rubens' monumental altarpieces.<sup>642</sup>

Further emphasis on the high altar was given by the natural lighting of the church. Whereas the light play in the church is typically baroque, what is unique is that the sources of natural light are not windows in the vault or the nave, but the windows of the side-aisles and the façade window, plus two hidden windows in the choir and a lantern.<sup>643</sup> Ria Fabri has suggested that the parallel beams of light, described by the Jesuits as divine light, created a dynamic play which centralised at the apse.<sup>644</sup> Nathalie Poppe has shown with a digital study that the altar was indeed the most illuminated part of the church.<sup>645</sup> We might imagine how the directional light, which entered from the right, was echoed and was further intensified by the painterly beams in the altarpieces. Thus, architecture and painting

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<sup>638</sup> Knaap, 2006a: qt. 187. For the ceiling paintings, see also Martin, 1968.

<sup>639</sup> Knaap, 2006a.

<sup>640</sup> Knaap, 2006b: 160.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid.: 160-61.

<sup>642</sup> Lombaerde, 2008: 26; Göttler, 1999.

<sup>643</sup> Poppe, 2008: esp. 144, 149.

<sup>644</sup> Fabri, 2008.

<sup>645</sup> Poppe, 2008.

created a parallel sense of real divine light. The altarpieces were not viewed both at the same time, but the one could replace the other with the help of a mechanism. The canvases were placed behind and above the altar and thus were visible from every corner of the church. Even greater prominence was achieved by using the new type of portico altarpiece, in the form of a triumphal arch.<sup>646</sup> As can be seen in figure 62, this type substitutes the lateral wings with two sculpted columns emphasising the celebration of the Eucharist underneath. As the next section shows, Rubens' altarpieces further highlight the power of the sacraments, and especially the Eucharist, to sublimate the human condition with the intercession of the saints. After looking briefly at the iconography of the altarpieces, I will focus on the centrality of the saintly body and the emphasis on the Eucharistic body of Christ, in order to acquire a better view of the transformative human body.

### Ignatius and Xavier at the nexus of the divine and the physical

In both paintings the central figures are the Jesuit saints, whose canonisation is propagandised by giving prominence to their miraculous powers.<sup>647</sup> Both Ignatius and Xavier stand upright, steady and elevated in the middle right of the paintings. Whilst the depicted scenes bring together a sample of miracles from the saints' lives, they assume unity of time and place. Several images have been identified with motifs from hagiographical texts and the biographies of Ignatius and Xavier by Pedro Ribadeneira and

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<sup>646</sup> Peeters (2007: 158) argues that the portico was disseminated from Italy to the Spanish Netherlands by Rubens in the 1610s after his journey to Italy.

<sup>647</sup> Ignatius was beatified in 1609 and Xavier in 1619. Both were canonised in 1622.

Orazio Torsellino respectively.<sup>648</sup> The identification of these motifs is beyond the scope of the present discussion, although it is noteworthy that the core of the scenes emphasises resurrection, exorcism and the metamorphosis of the body through divine intervention.

The *Ignatius* canvas depicts the founder of the Jesuit order miraculously removing demons from possessed human bodies. Ignatius is depicted in the interior of a church wearing festive garments. The golden fabric of his chasuble corresponds to the drapery of the altar, according to the prescriptions of the Catholic Church.<sup>649</sup> The lit candle suggests that it is the moment of consecration. Angels above the saint are about to offer him the palm and the crown, while the two anthropomorphous bodies and a dragon indicate the expulsion of the Devil from the possessed woman and man in the foreground. The uncontrollable bodies of the possessed have aroused panic and a great range of emotions in the group on the left. Some of them are struggling to move the possessed towards Ignatius. Others are depicted feeling compassion, praying and even crying. On the right of Ignatius, nine Jesuits watch the spectacle. The first one on the right may be Francis Xavier himself. On his left, two women with their babies proceed with piety towards the altar, and a man on the right margin shows a rope around his neck.<sup>650</sup> The presence of the women implies Ignatius' intervention in difficult births and confinements, while the man represents spiritual healing through confession.<sup>651</sup> This man has been persuasively identified by Hans Vlieghe as the man of Barcelona who although hanging himself was confessed by Ignatius

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<sup>648</sup> Ribadeneira, 1572, revised 1587; Torsellino, 1596.

<sup>649</sup> 'Catholic Encyclopedia: *Liturgical Colours*', <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04134a.htm> (accessed 13 June 2014).

<sup>650</sup> Vlieghe, 1972-73, II: 73.

<sup>651</sup> Ribadeneira, 1976: 23.4: 302; 23.5: 304-305; In Ribadeneira's biography, Ignatius is presented as curing not only mothers, but also children.



before dying.<sup>652</sup> Ignatius thus managed to save his soul from the sin of committing suicide, by ensuring a good, Christian death.

On the other hand, the *Xavier* altarpiece illustrates this saint's miraculous activities in Asia and conversion of the infidels, a key hagiographical topic. Bodily and spiritual transformation and healing is again the centre of the painting. Xavier stands on a stone platform dressed in the typical, simple black robe of the Jesuit missionaries, and behind him, also in black, is his acolyte. Above his head in the clouds, angels carry the cross; in a prominent position a woman, the personification of faith, brings the chalice and the globe, manifesting the global aspirations of Catholicism and the Jesuit order, the "plus ultra". From this group on the right upper part of the painting, a lightning bolt smashes the pagan Asian idols.<sup>653</sup> In the foreground, on the right, several kinds of cripples are depicted; a blind man extends his hands and paralytics are on their knees. From the hand of the man in red to the extended hands of the blind man, the eye of the observer subtly passes to the miracles of resurrection. Two men are depicted on their graves between life and death, and the baby who spits water might well be the Indian baby who drowned in a well, and was brought back to life by Xavier after he made the sign of the cross upon the dead body.<sup>654</sup> To my mind it is not sure that the woman, who holds the baby, is the mother. Torsellino says that St Francis "restored three dead men to life, besides a young maid".<sup>655</sup> The colour of her flesh and her clothing, which looks like a shroud, possibly suggests that she is the "young maid". Around the resurrected, people appear in diverse emotional states. They

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<sup>652</sup> Ibid. 6.4: 56-57; Vlieghe, 1972-73, II: 74.

<sup>653</sup> The motif has been associated by Graham Smith with Torsellino's account of the Indians who destroyed the pagan images in their temples after converting to the Catholic faith. However, Vlieghe and Boeckl note that the episode deviates from the text, since the idol in the canvas is not destroyed by the Indians themselves. Vlieghe, 1972-3, II: 27; Boeckl, 1996: 984; Torsellino, 1632, II, 1.

<sup>654</sup> Torsellino, 1632, II, 7: 134.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid.: 133.

cry, pray, feel surprise, joy or wonder. Moreover, the importance of confession and the sacrament of Penance is underlined by the soldier in the middle, whose soul Xavier famously saved after confession.<sup>656</sup> The man next to him with the Asian is probably a heathen priest, who was converted by Xavier.<sup>657</sup>

The spiritual centre of both paintings is the hands of the saints, which link the upper and the lower part of the paintings, the terrestrial with the celestial, with Ignatius and Xavier positioned in an intermediate, middle zone and in the middle of the vertical axis. With his left hand Xavier points upwards, where *Fides Catholica* is represented.<sup>658</sup> His hand pointing to the Cross and the chalice reveals that the source of saintly power is divine power. It is only through divine permission that saints perform miracles. The divine power passes from the divine sphere to the saint's hands, and with a diagonal line from Xavier's left hand to his right, with which he performs the miracles. He smashes the pagan Asian idols and resurrects the dead, while blessing the crowd underneath (fig. 63). By curing and blessing, Xavier is presented here as Christ-like.

Similarly, Ignatius is highlighted as a nexus between the mundane and the divine sphere. The diagonal of his hands, likewise, links the two other zones and reveals the living flesh of Christ as the source of his power; from the chalice to his left hand resting on the altar, and then to his right hand which is performing the miracles (fig. 64). As Leone states, the chalice "becomes the pivotal element...on the one side, it symbolises the grace that Ignatius distributes by his left hand; on the other side, it represents the rampart of the battle

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<sup>656</sup> Ibid.: III, 15.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid.: II, 9; Vlieghe, 1972-3, II: 26.

<sup>658</sup> Graham Smith (1969) has suggested that St Xavier's posture recalls the Roman gesture of *adlocutio*, the most famous example being the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius in the Arch of Constantine, in Rome.

that, by his right hand, Ignatius fights against the devil.”<sup>659</sup> The hands of Ignatius and Xavier are therefore the merging point of divinity and humanity. Furthermore, the saints are the channels of divine grace, which is manifested through the sacraments.

According to the Catholic faith, the saints were believed to be eternal living mediators of divinity having sacred, uncorrupted and immortal bodies. The “gradual and painful catharsis” they experienced throughout their life elevated them immediately at the time of death from the human to the divine sphere without the intermediary stage of purgatory.<sup>660</sup> As Carlos Eire argues, “because saints were human beings who inhabited heaven, they belonged as much to the temporal as to the eternal, to the material as to the spiritual.”<sup>661</sup> Therefore, their semi-divine bodies were much venerated and were believed to perform miracles. Xavier’s incorrupt body was famous for bleeding up to five months after his death, and his right forearm was detached and installed in the Church of the Gesù in Rome in 1614. The relics and other sacramentals of Ignatius and Xavier were extensively used for blessing and for healing miracles, even though not always with the expected success.<sup>662</sup>

Nevertheless, the Jesuit altarpieces emphasise that it is divine power and the sacraments which permit the performance of miracles. The emphasis on the Eucharist and Penance cannot be seen in separation from Protestant criticism.<sup>663</sup> The Jesuits fervently advocated frequent confession as a means of transforming the soul and beginning a new life. This emphasis is evidenced by the lists of sins, the instructions to confessors to

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<sup>659</sup> Leone, 2010: 161.

<sup>660</sup> Eire, 1995: 378.

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid.*: 376.

<sup>662</sup> See e.g. De Waardt, 2009; Walsham, 2003; Johnson, 1996.

<sup>663</sup> For the importance of frequent confession and communion for the Jesuits, see O’Malley, 1993, 134-57; Maryks, 2008: ch. 1.

emulate the prototype of father, and the Jesuit lectures on “cases of conscience”, which demanded study and extra attention to the sinner’s case.<sup>664</sup> The confessor, as the doctor of the soul, was expected to provide spiritual medicine, psychological support and consolation to the sinful.<sup>665</sup> The sacrament of Penance is closely associated with the Eucharist, which was also of crucial importance for the Jesuits.<sup>666</sup> Ignatius Loyola in the *Constitutions of the Society* instructs the non-ordained members of the Church to “confess and receive Communion at least every eight days”.<sup>667</sup> Both sacraments aim at spiritual progress through transformation, with Penance being considered as a prerequisite for the Eucharist: first take out sin and purge the soul, then take in the body of Christ.

The soldier in the *Xavier* painting and the man with the rope in the *Ignatius* canvas point to the cathartic effects of confession. However, stronger emphasis is given to the Eucharist, with the chalice creating dynamic diagonals. In the one painting, the salutary effects of the Eucharistic food are manifested from the chalice to Xavier and then to the resurrected man. In the other scene, these effects move from Christ’s crucified body to the chalice and to the possessed man – or from the chalice to the left then right hand of Ignatius, and from there to the demons and the possessed. Nevertheless, the relationship between the living body of Christ and the human body is not merely representational or symbolic, but it draws on broader ontological questions. In order to support this argument

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<sup>664</sup> O’Malley, 1993: 136-52. Nevertheless, the Jesuits were accused of exploiting confession and the sacrament of Penance to gain access to political matters and offer guidance. The publication of the *Instruction for Confessors of Princes*, 1602, by the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, the Italian Claudio Acquaviva, clearly indicates this. In this text, the confessor is advised to avoid having a presence at court and the exercise of political power; see Bireley, 2003: esp. 28-29, 78. For the use of auricular confession for propaganda purposes and social disciplining in the Catholic state of Bavaria and with extensive reference to the Jesuits, see Lederer, 2006: esp. 49-98.

<sup>665</sup> O’Malley, 1993: 136-52; Lederer, 2006: 11-12.

<sup>666</sup> This is clearly seen in *De frequenti usu sanctissimi Eucharistiae sacramenti libellus* (1555), the first publication on the Eucharist by a Jesuit, in which Cristóforo de Madrid promotes frequent communion.

<sup>667</sup> Ignatius Loyola, 1970: 158 [261].

and to reach larger conclusions regarding the painterly human body, it is important to draw attention first to the Eucharistic body of Christ as a psychosomatic unity, and second to the healing properties of this food for the human body, again as a psychosomatic unity.

### The feeding of the community

How physicality and spirituality, materiality and immateriality, visibility and invisibility are conjoined in the species of bread and wine was a matter of ambivalence, disputation and great controversy in Reformation Europe. How can a human being chew and swallow Christ's flesh and drink the blood of God's son? How can Christ's real body be ingested without being smashed and violated? And how does the eating of the incarnate body of Christ deify humans and not condemn them for cannibalism? According to the thirteenth session of the Council of Trent (1545-63), during the sacrament of the Eucharist, the total substance of bread and wine, while retaining its appearance, is actually converted to the real body and blood of Jesus (Transubstantiation).<sup>668</sup> In this there is no implication of cannibalism since the transubstantiated body and blood of Christ is really eaten but not tasted as human flesh and blood. Chewing also does not hurt Christ since, according to the doctrine of concomitance, "the whole Christ is contained under each species, and under every part of each species, when separated".<sup>669</sup>

It is therefore the whole psychosomatic body of Christ to which the wheaten bread and the natural wine of grapes, the two ingredients of this meal, are converted during

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<sup>668</sup> The Council of Trent, trans. Waterworth, 1848: session XIII, ch. IV.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid: canon III.

transubstantiation. It is through the common but vital processes of chewing, swallowing, digesting and absorbing the nutrients of the living flesh and blood of Christ into the human blood and flesh, the humours, veins and organs, that the human body merges with the hypostatic body of Christ (human and divine properties are united), and partakes of deification and immortality. In this process, the body becomes the vital means for communication with God and for spiritual progress. Highlighting the most sublimated qualities of this heavenly food, “the life of the soul, and the perpetual health of their mind”, the Council of Trent described the Eucharist as “the spiritual food of souls”. Understanding spiritual sublimation and catharsis as the end of this process does not entail that the body is bypassed as an empty vessel. On the contrary, eating the Eucharistic meal makes the human body, regardless of gender, impregnated with the living body of Christ. The faithful, as the new mother of the resurrected body of Christ, face the challenge of protecting and properly nurturing the living body of Christ – as well as being protected by it – by acting according to Christian virtues and striving to “contribute to the earthly embodiment of his spirit.”<sup>670</sup>

Given that the Eucharistic psychosomatic body of Christ resides in the human body, it is not surprising that the miraculous properties of the Eucharistic food are salutary for both soul and body. For example, in the Christian tradition the salutary properties of the Eucharistic food cure diseases, deformities, sterility and physical weaknesses.<sup>671</sup> The first healing miracle which was performed by Christ’s dead body cured a blind man. According to the tradition, after piercing Jesus’ body with his lance, a soldier called Longinus had his

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<sup>670</sup> Van Wyhe, 2009: 242.

<sup>671</sup> Bynum, 2011: 139.

physical and spiritual sight restored after his eyes came into contact with the blood of Christ.<sup>672</sup>

The image of Christ as physician and the nourishing properties of the Eucharistic food for the body and soul were established by the early Church Fathers. Clement of Alexandria, popular in Neostoic circles due to his engagement with Stoic philosophy and whose *Opera* was in Albert Rubens' library, addresses the popular image of *Christus Medicus*.<sup>673</sup> While the physician heals the body, "the good Educator...who created man, concerns Himself with the whole creature, and as the Physician of the whole man heals both body and soul."<sup>674</sup> Later in his discussion, Clement formulates the popular image of Christ as mother.<sup>675</sup> By drawing on physiology, Clement explains that blood is the fundamental matter of the human body, from which milk is processed to nourish the flesh of the newborn. What, then, is more nourishing than the holy blood and flesh of Christ?

'Eat My flesh,' He says, 'and drink My blood.' [John, 6.55] He is himself the nourishment that He gives. He delivers up His own flesh and pours out His own blood. There is nothing lacking His children, that they may grow. What a mysterious paradox! He bids us put off the former mortality of the flesh and, with it, the former nourishment, and receive instead this other new life of Christ...<sup>676</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> Bildhauer, 2013: 59.

<sup>673</sup> Arents, 2001: 341 (3kol.2); this is the edition by Heinsius and Sylburg, 1629. For Justus Lipsius' use of Clement in his writings, see Papy, 2004b: 507-27; 2009: 151-53.

<sup>674</sup> Clement of Alexandria, 1954: I.ii, 7-8.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid.: I.vi, esp. 38-45. For Christ as mother, see Bynum, 1982.

<sup>676</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *ibid.*: 40.

The image of Christ as nourishing mother is indicative of the wider interest of the medieval and early modern world in the flexibility and fluidity of gender.<sup>677</sup> Rubens illustrates Christ as the nurse of the faithful in the frontispiece for the *Amor Divinus*, 1615, of Carolus Scribani (fig. 65).<sup>678</sup> It shows Christ's blood spurting from his breasts in imitation of Mary's lactation. One of the figures collects the blood in the chalice. The nourishing and rejuvenating properties that the holy meal offers through the unification of the human body with Christ are celebrated in the Jesuit altarpieces. It is the Eucharistic living body of Christ which vanquishes disease, death and the Devil, and provides new life by curing, transforming and resurrecting the body as a psychosomatic unity.

Besides the unification of the human with the divine body, the Eucharistic meal unites the members of the *corpus mysticum* into one and the same body: "For we are one bread, one body, though many in number".<sup>679</sup> Early Christian writers established the analogy of the members of the Church with the bread's grains of wheat or the wine's grapes.<sup>680</sup> Consequently, the Eucharist forged community within the early modern world. Ernst Kantorowicz has explored in his landmark study the gradual shift of the *corpus mysticum* from describing the Eucharist as the whole Church, to its adaptation by the state.<sup>681</sup> While Kantorowicz sees in this process the alienation of sovereign and *corpus mysticum* from their Eucharistic origins, Margit Thøfner, by focusing on the Spanish Netherlands, has pointed out that these origins were recalled on the occasion of the Joyous Entry of the Archdukes into Lille, when after attending Mass the Archdukes participated in the

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<sup>677</sup> See e.g. Davis, 1983, 1995; Howard, 1988; Bynum, 1991, 2001; Vandenbroeck and Irigaray, 1994; Cressy, 1996; Donnell, 2003; Muravyeva and Tovio, 2013.

<sup>678</sup> Judson and van de Velde, 1978: vol. 1, 65, vol. 2, fig. 16.

<sup>679</sup> St. Paul, 1 Corinthians: 10:17; 'Catholic Encyclopedia: 1 Corinthians: 10', <http://www.newadvent.org/bible/1co010.htm> (accessed 13 June 2014).

<sup>680</sup> Bynum, 1987: 33, 48-69.

<sup>681</sup> Kantorowicz, 1957.



distribution of the Eucharist.<sup>682</sup> It was an act not only of consecrating the new rulers but of consolidating the unity between sovereigns and subjects in one consecrated body, in “perpetua pace & sancta vnione” (“perpetual peace and holy union”).<sup>683</sup> It was also an act of establishing a relationship of affection as well as power between the Archdukes as spiritual parents and their people.<sup>684</sup>

With particular reference to the Jesuit Church in Antwerp, Thøfner has suggested that the church “embodied not simply the Catholic Church, but rather the Catholic Church as headed and protected by the saintly Habsburg sovereigns.”<sup>685</sup> As discussed earlier, the intense and perpetual iconic presence of the Archdukes in the church, in relation to its decoration with precious materials and light effects were seen by the visitors as constructing “a courtly image of the heavenly Jerusalem”.<sup>686</sup> Therefore, the princely bodies and the church of Antwerp become a channel for the *corpus mysticum* and for each individual separately to reach and unite with the divine, as well as with the community of the Church. This mystical union was consecrated and received a physical hypostasis by sharing the Eucharistic body of Christ. The common meal united in one body social, ecclesiastical and political structures. With the saints to link the terrestrial and the celestial and to manifest the transformative power of the sacraments, the Jesuit altarpieces enhance for the faithful their partaking in that mystic and physical union with both the divine and the human.

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<sup>682</sup> Thøfner, 1996: 31-35.

<sup>683</sup> The incident is narrated by the secretary of Antwerp, Bochius, 1602: 370; cited after Thøfner, 1996: 31.

<sup>684</sup> For the Archdukes as spiritual nurturers of the body politic, see van Wyhe, 2009: 240-51.

<sup>685</sup> Thøfner, 1996: 122.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*: 115-54, qt. 116.

### In-between disease and healing: the ontological transformation of the body

A look at the compositional structure of the Jesuit altarpieces raises more profound questions about the ontology, nurture and health of the human body by establishing a direct link between disease and infidelity. In Ignatius' painting the movements of the bodies in the foreground are of exceptional interest. While all the people proceed toward the altar, the possessed and the demons are moving away from it, manifesting their abhorrence of the holy food (fig. 66). The chalice thus functions as a sort of magnet which pulls the faithful, whilst it repels the enemies of faith.

In the *Xavier* painting, it is important to note that the power of the saint is manifested in a circular direction: from the angels and Xavier to the dynamic smashing of the idols, and then to the group of the resurrected – still between life and death with the man at the foreground being closer to death – and to the cripples who are still waiting for the cure (fig. 67). One more detail is revealing. The cured people look towards the saint, whereas the deformed look towards the idols (fig. 68). Leone has rightly, I believe, explained this visual correspondence through the infidelity of the deformed, which is mirrored in the pagan temple.<sup>687</sup> This link of disease-infidelity and health-faith seems to me to be enhanced by the circular movement of the miraculous power. The smashing of the pagan temple looks to chronologically precede the restoration of the health of the people. This might connote that denunciation of false beliefs is necessary for the convalescence of the body. The colouristic correspondence between the marble temple and the stony flesh of the resurrected emphasises the transitory process from death to life, as well as from infidelity to faith. The reclining man in the foreground is still in a dramatic situation with a look

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<sup>687</sup> Leone, 2010: 476.

between wonder and agony. The weakness of his body, the almost putrefied flesh and the difficulty in movement manifest the magnitude of the miracle: the weaker or more repulsive the body, the stronger the miracle.

By focusing exclusively on this man Christine Boeckl has distanced herself from the accepted interpretation of a resurrected man, and instead has suggested that he is a victim of bubonic plague. She points to the similarity between the man's pose and common imagery of the plague. Interestingly, Xavier had "stayed the plague in Japan".<sup>688</sup> To refuse the interpretation of resurrection seems to me unconvincing. If we detach the man from the context of the canvas, it becomes indeed uncertain whether the gravedigger works in order to put the man into the grave, or, as I believe, has just removed him out of it. However, the emphasis that the man receives in relation to the other figures of the canvas suggests him to be the most important miracle. The strong diagonal which links him to heaven, as well as his correspondence with the possessed in Ignatius' canvas, strongly suggest his resurrection (fig. 69). Furthermore, the man bears outstanding iconographic similarities with the reclining, resurrected man at the bottom left corner of Rubens' *Last Judgment* (1617, Alte Pinakothek; figs 70-72). However, I do not deny that plague might have formerly killed him, given that Xavier was soon to acquire fame as a plague intercessor.<sup>689</sup> The relationship between plague and heresy becomes stronger when we consider that heresy and pestilential diseases are much related in Jesuit rhetoric, as will be discussed later.

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<sup>688</sup> Boeckl, 1996.

<sup>689</sup> Thijs (1993: 21) notes that the prints which promoted Francis Xavier as a plague saint reached considerable numbers. During the 1660s, 36,000 prints were handed out at Mechelen.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, Boeckl has looked at the body of the “plague victim” as a metaphor for his heretical views. While the present discussion supports a link between the depicted diseased body and infidelity, I do not support either Boeckl’s interpretation of the body of the man as a mere metaphor for heresy, or Leone’s approach to the body as a sign. It will be argued in this section that the diseased body is not simply a metaphor for false beliefs, but that its physicality constitutes, and is constituted by, spirituality. My argument that the painted body should be perceived as being ontologically a psychosomatic unity, and disease as *being* both spiritual and physical, will be explored by looking at the Jesuit view of the human body, and particularly at issues of health and disease. Before exploring the body in more detail, it must be clarified that “disease” is used here in the sense of an abnormal condition of the body which departs from health. Regarding the Jesuit altarpieces, “the diseased body” will be applied particularly to the resurrected, who are under a process of transformation and convalescence from bodily abnormality, and also to the deformed and the possessed.

Drawing a line between religious and medical early modern views of the body is not an easy task, unlike today. Secular and spiritual medicine largely interacted and enmeshed with religious theories. Between the medical and religious viewpoint there was little conflict, even though the primacy of religion was emphasised by both Catholics and Protestants.<sup>690</sup> A diseased person could choose a healer from a wide variety of advisers, among which the medicalised physicians became the first choice as healers only in the nineteenth century.<sup>691</sup> An anatomist who challenged the Galenic view of the body could be

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<sup>690</sup> Lindemann, 2010: 237; Wear, 1998: 153.

<sup>691</sup> See further Lindemann, 2010: ch. 7, esp. 237.

easily accused of heresy.<sup>692</sup> On the other hand, most religious healers promoted a combination of spiritual and secular healing.<sup>693</sup> Spiritual healers understood the body through a conjoined perspective of Galenic physiology, as being constituted of four humours, Aristotelian faculties (vegetative, sensitive and rational) and Christian morality. They believed in a causal link between disease and actions, humoral imbalance and sin, enhancing thus further the link between microcosm and macrocosm.<sup>694</sup> Sin could corrupt the bodily humours and conversely, holiness could bring balance and health.<sup>695</sup>

As David Lederer explains, theologians and many humanists understood the body through the Aristotelian doctrine of hylomorphism, which “treated form and matter as equally substantial elements of existence, connoting the interconnectedness of mind and body... Hylomorphism invoked a holistic approach towards treatment for the soul, justifying equal attention to both spirit and body.”<sup>696</sup> Yet, soul and body were not perceived as being of equal significance. The primacy of the soul, as well as that of the rational faculty, was not questioned. Human life was justified by a combination of Aristotelian actuality/actualisation (the state of motion and action; *energeia*) and Christian soteriology (the salvation from human sin).<sup>697</sup> Immoral behaviour and actions affected the well-being of the individual, undermining his or her salvation.

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<sup>692</sup> Grell and Cunningham, 1996: 5.

<sup>693</sup> Lindemann, 2010: 15.

<sup>694</sup> Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, 1964: 75-102, 107; Lindemann, 1999: 43-44; Lederer, 2006: 17-18, 25-32.

<sup>695</sup> Gentilcore, 1998: 6.

<sup>696</sup> Lederer, 2006: 24.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*; see further this chapter pp. 259-60.

The nexus of Galenic physiology, Aristotelian faculties and Christian morality-pathology pervaded the Jesuit understanding of the human body.<sup>698</sup> For the founder of the Society, Ignatius Loyola, the strength of the body was of crucial importance for divine service. In the second chapter of the *Constitutions of the Society*, entitled *The preservation of the body*, Ignatius declared: “Just as it is unwise to assign too much physical labor that the spirit should be oppressed and the body be harmed, so too some bodily exercise to help both the body and the spirit is ordinarily expedient for all...”<sup>699</sup> The preservation of a healthy body was vital for communicating with God and offering a better divine service. Yet, not only the soul but also the healthy body was a means of glorifying God, as Ignatius quotes: “the Lord may be more glorified through our souls and bodies.”<sup>700</sup> Moreover, Ignatius Loyola expresses his appreciation of secular medicine by advising that the physicians’ orders must be followed with patience and obedience.<sup>701</sup> Especially, regarding “food, sleep, and the use of the other things necessary or proper for living”, Ignatius recommends that one should trust the advice of the physician of his region, an instruction which further indicates the attachment of the Jesuits to humoral physiology and its emphasis on the environment as one of the non-naturals that impacted on the body.<sup>702</sup>

The Jesuit professor of theology at the University of Leuven, Leonardo Lessius, clearly looks at the body as a psychosomatic unity and argues for the importance of physical well-being for spiritual progress. In his popular treatise on dietetics, *Hygiasticon* (which was mentioned in chapter 1 as being in Rubens’ possession), Lessius underlines the

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<sup>698</sup> Lederer, 2006: 34-35; that the humours and faculties were crucial for the Jesuit understanding of the human body is evident in the curricula of the Jesuits schools by the General of the order, Francis Borgia (35).

<sup>699</sup> Ignatius Loyola, 1970: 168.

<sup>700</sup> Ibid.: 169.

<sup>701</sup> Ibid.: 160, 167, 170.

<sup>702</sup> Ibid.: 259. For the experience of the body as being affected by the environment and the meshing of spirituality and medicine, see van Wyhe, 2015a, in print.

significance of a regimen for the proper functioning of mind and soul for “all those whose employments consist in affairs and businesses appertaining to the minde and understanding”.<sup>703</sup> Lessius suggests temperate eating and drinking, the avoidance of excesses, and especially moderation in drinking and meat-eating (even a total abstinence from meat). This adheres to the dietetic rule of humoral physiology that excess brings humoral imbalance, weakness and disease. Accordingly, Lessius explains that the “vapours and fumes” produced by excessive intake, especially of meat, “cloud and overshadow the clearnesse of the Brain”.<sup>704</sup> Hence, “the Vegetative part should be ordered so to not offend or damage the Animal or Reasonable parts of the soul” or to cause “disturbances to the other faculties, the wit, senses, imagination, understanding, memory”.<sup>705</sup>

The interest of Lessius and Ignatius in regimen and in the physicality of the body suggests an understanding in humoral terms and bodily faculties as largely coherent with the principles of secular medicine. Lessius’ outstanding confidence in elaborating on dietetic issues does not prove that such an understanding and interest in medicine was the norm among Jesuits. However, the Jesuit libraries in Antwerp clearly show that medicine was one of the order’s prime interests. These were well stocked, with treatises on botany, several books by Hippocrates, Galen and Avicenna, as well as works by early modern physicians such as Andreas Vesalius, Hieronymus Mercurialis and Jean Fernel (writers who were also present in Rubens’ library, as addressed in chapter 1).<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>703</sup> Lessius, 1634: 12-13.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid.: 33. For this concept in relation to Rubens’ diet, as addressed by Roger de Piles, see here ch. 2: 113-15.

<sup>705</sup> Lessius, 1634: 31-32.

<sup>706</sup> The catalogue was compiled between 1775 and 1778, because of the disbandment of the order. However, a significant number of the medical books were published during the period under examination. See “*Catalogue de livres des Bibliothèques...*”, 1779: 68-71.

Nevertheless, the Jesuit understanding of the body cannot be examined within the framework of secular medicine. In Christian pathology, sin was the primary cause of disease. God was thought to send disease either as punishment or as a test of faith. Epidemics were more usually related to sin, while individual diseases to trial. Evil spirits were also believed to cause disease and spiritual afflictions, such as “melancholy, epilepsy, paralysis, blindness, deafness, mental disturbances and imaginations”.<sup>707</sup>

Exorcism, the main miracle in the *Ignatius* canvas, was not denied by the medical community, which as mentioned in the introduction did diagnose miraculous healing.<sup>708</sup> As in the cases of sanctity and witchcraft, the consultancy of physicians was necessary, firstly to be assured that the disease had no natural explanation, thus meaning that spiritual healing was needed; secondly, after the cure by a religious healer, to certify this as a “supernatural wonder”.<sup>709</sup> That even the medical community accepted demonic possession as being instigated by sin and as affecting both body and soul is indicated by the Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius (1505-68). In his *Occulta naturae miracula* (1559, Antwerp), recorded in Rubens library, Lemnius explains that devils infect the body in the same way as contagious diseases and urges “divine, and supercelestial” remedies, such as “solid faith, & certain confidence in God the Father by Christ.”<sup>710</sup> Lemnius’ explanation of the cause of demonic possession – that is, infidelity to God – was part of a well-established view that

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<sup>707</sup> Gentilcore, 1998: 161.

<sup>708</sup> See here p. 24-25.

<sup>709</sup> Grell and Cunningham, 1996: 6; Gentilcore, 1998: 12, 14; Almond, 2004: 2-7; Harrison, 2004: 114. Harrison’s research indicates that the miracles curing mental or physical disease rise to 87 per cent in the seventeenth century, while Vauchez notes that in medieval miracles, healings from illness constitute 80 to 90 per cent; 17, 72.

<sup>710</sup> Lemnius, 1658: ch. LVII, 385-90, qt. 385-86; “The evil spirits mingle themselves with our food, humours, spirits, with the ayre and breath, that we draw in and breathe out; and they pollute many other things that serve for our use, and whereby our health is preserved” (385).



the Devil assaults the infidel.<sup>711</sup> The Jesuits vehemently argued for the relationship between the Devil and heresy. This is explicitly articulated in Jan David's emblem book *Veridicus Christianus* (1601), published by the Plantin House in Antwerp, engraved by Theodoor Galle and recorded in Rubens' library.<sup>712</sup> Here, David clearly states that "hereticos esse filios diaboli, quia opera eius faciunt" ("Heretics are the sons of the Devil, because they make his works").<sup>713</sup> In the Ignatius altarpiece, the fact that the possessed move away from the altar, the crucified Christ and the saint, indicates their infidelity and the great power which demons have over their bodies (fig. 66). The detailed rendering of the pathological state of the possessed argues for spiritual authenticity and contradicts any accusations of the inauthenticity of possession.<sup>714</sup>

In Jesuit understanding, sin – and especially infidelity – was a major cause of disease. Consolation and guidance by the confessor, faith in God, the sacraments, ritual ceremonies and pilgrimages were suggested as remedies. Above all, Ignatius Loyola stressed that sickness should be "accepted as a gift from the hand of our Creator and Lord, since it is a gift not less than is health."<sup>715</sup> The French Jesuit and prolific writer Etienne Binet (1569-1639) further evinces the consolatory Jesuit stance towards disease, as well as the direct link between disease and sin. In his treatise *Consolation et rejouissance des malades* (1618), recorded in the library of the Antwerp Jesuit College, Binet offers consolation by arguing that God sends disease to those whom He loves, in order to make them exercise

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<sup>711</sup> Ibid.: 386.

<sup>712</sup> Arents, 2001: 342 (4kol.1).

<sup>713</sup> David, 1606: 38; see also pp. 22-25, 30-35, 39, fig. 10, 11, 13.

<sup>714</sup> Kromm, 2002: 256-57. The French neurologist and professor of anatomical pathology Jean-Martin Charcot (1887) characterises Rubens as a superior clinician who depicted a woman actually suffering from hysteria (as diagnosed by Charcot).

<sup>715</sup> Ignatius Loyola, 1970: 160.

their virtues.<sup>716</sup> According to Binet, “la maladie est la maistresse des vertus, & le purgatoire de nos pechez; la santè est le purgatoire des vertus, & la maistresse des vices” (“the disease is the mistress of virtues, and the purgatory of our sins; health is the purgatory of the virtues and the mistress of our vices”).<sup>717</sup> If individual disease is the purgatory of sins, plague is for Binet an even greater opportunity for moral, spiritual and mental transformation, salvation and sanctification. In his treatise *Remedes souverains contre la peste et la mort soudaine* (1628), which Rubens had in his library, Binet poses the question: “si la peste faict plus de mal, que de bien” (“whether pest/plague brings more harm than good”). He quickly answers: “Dieu n’envoye jamais du mal à ses serviteurs que se ne foit pour leur plus grand bien” (“God would have never sent the evils to his servants, if it was not for greater good to come”).<sup>718</sup> Binet explains that God sends “peste”, but only for greater good, since the disease keeps people away from sin and debauchery, makes them wise and helps them to apply themselves to acts of charity, prayers, Masses and communions.<sup>719</sup> As remedies, he prescribes repentance, participation in the sacraments, frequent communion and confession and acts of mercy.<sup>720</sup>

An insight into the place of pestilential disease in the Jesuit mentality is provided by Lynn Martin.<sup>721</sup> For the Jesuits, the primary cause of pestilence was believed to be Divine Providence, while the secondary included natural phenomena, like contagion, corruption of the air, celestial influences, etc. On the one hand, the remedy for mitigating divine wrath

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<sup>716</sup> Binet, 1618: esp. 2. For an overview of Binet’s treatises, see Worcester, 2007.

<sup>717</sup> Binet, 1618: 41.

<sup>718</sup> Binet, 1628: 1-2. Binet’s book was published in Italian in 1656, as *Sourani ed efficaci rimedi contro la peste e morte subitanea*. Rubens may have found this book a good way to consol himself after the death of his wife Isabella Brant in 1626. See here, ch. 4: 188, fn. 535.

<sup>719</sup> Binet, 1628: esp. 18-20, 28, 47, 75.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.: esp. 6, 17, 47-48, 75.

<sup>721</sup> Lynn Martin, 1996.

took appropriately religious forms, such as processions and pilgrimages, repentance and confession, participation in the sacraments, Masses, communion, penitence, fasting, prayers to God and the saints, and acts of charity. On the other hand, the secondary remedy was considered to be the advice of physicians, an emphasis on hygiene, but mainly “the run away” from the disease. Nevertheless, these two categories do not imply that the first one was adequate for healing the soul, while the second one for the body. Both religious and medical recipes were believed to be able to heal the body.

That pestilence was considered to result from sin and particularly from false beliefs is suggested by an anonymous pamphlet, published in 1577 by the Jesuit Antonio Possevino and titled *Cause et rimedii della peste, et d'altre infermità*. This addresses sin as the only cause of disease and penitence as the remedy, while for Possevino heresy is one of the five categories of sins evoking disease and pestilence.<sup>722</sup> According to Possevino, the remedy for the diseased body is prayer, acts of charity, confession and communion, fasting, Masses, sermons and spiritual exercises.<sup>723</sup> This causal relationship between infidelity/heresy and disease has often been misunderstood by virtue of the fact that in several cases the Jesuit rhetoric employs disease terminology as a vitriolic linguistic metaphor. In a letter, for example, to Father Peter Canisius (13 August 1554), Ignatius Loyola discusses heresy in disease terminology:

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<sup>722</sup> Qt. after Lynn Martin, 1996: 89, 95. Lynn Martin (95) also refers to the epidemic that struck the Protestant community of Graz in 1575, described by the Jesuits as “a singular visit by God.”

<sup>723</sup> Possevino, 1571: 49-59; Lynn Martin: 98-99. For further material on spiritual physic as the remedy for plague, see Lederer, 2006: 14. For the relationship between sin and heresy, see also David, 1606: 18-21, fig. 6.

Seeing the progress which the heretics have made in a short time, spreading the poison of their evil teaching throughout so many countries and peoples, and making use of the verse of the Apostle to describe their progress, “And their speech spreadeth like a canker,” [Timothy, 2: 17] it would seem that our Society, having been accepted by Divine Providence among the efficacious means to repair such great damage...[and] to preserve what is still sound and to restore what has fallen sick of the plague of heresy, especially in the northern nations.<sup>724</sup>

The wording here – “the plague of heresy” – sharpens the uncontrollable viciousness and contagiousness of heresy and urges the Jesuits’ duty to provide “help” to the heretics as “doctors of the soul”. As Harro Höpfl argues, “disease and infection metaphors” should be understood as “explanatory and diagnostic” and not as mere “re-formulations of what the definitions of heretics and heresy said without metaphor”.<sup>725</sup> Moore in his article “Heresy as Disease” explores the wide use of the disease vocabulary to the descriptions of medieval heresy.<sup>726</sup> Metaphor is essentially *representational* and “asserts that a similarity exists between two objects in the face of manifest differences between them.”<sup>727</sup> It is the contagiousness which gives impetus to metaphors of disease, such as either Ignatius’ “plague of heresy”, or the necessity of excluding the heretic member from the *corpus mysticum*, as Lessius states in his polemical *Controversy*: “*Their speech (sayth he) creepeth as a canker*. Even as therefore the canker is a disease which killeth a mans body

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<sup>724</sup> Ignatius Loyola, 1959: 345, letter 27.

<sup>725</sup> Höpfl, 2004: qt. 68.

<sup>726</sup> Moore, 1976. However, Moore’s study does not offer an indepth analysis of the concept.

<sup>727</sup> White, 1973: 34.

vnlesse it be cut away, even so is an heretike unto a company of Christians and Catholikes.”<sup>728</sup>

Nevertheless, in the light of the above discussion, to reduce the linkage between disease and infidelity to metaphor indicates a lack of understanding of the ontological relationship between soul and body, as well as of the power of spiritual medicine to shape pathology. A look at early modern medicine and the history of pathology suggest that it is the belief that sin and infidelity indeed cause sickness and pestilence that enriched the Jesuit rhetoric against heresy with its disease terminology. The ontological relationship between soul and body, spiritual health and bodily health, infidelity/heresy/sin and disease, suggests the diseased bodies in the Jesuit altarpieces as not merely symbols or metaphors of heresy, as Boeckl as well as Leone have argued. It suggests not that diseased bodies and sin share some qualities, but that physical disease is identical with sinful beliefs.

The reclining man in the *Xavier* canvas might, therefore, have been a victim of plague, but his body is not a metaphor or sign of infidelity. It *is* the formerly diseased body in a psychosomatic unity, which is under convalescence from both bodily and spiritual ill health. The deformed, who as shown in a previous chapter were largely seen as “wicked and malicious”, even by the secular physicians, are connoted as being restored to bodily and physical health as soon as they denounce their false beliefs.<sup>729</sup> Similarly, the possessed are expected to stop suffering and be restored to health by believing in the sacraments and the Christian principles. On the one hand, infidelity and spiritual disease, and on the other hand, faith and physical health are in a constitutive relationship. From this view, the

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<sup>728</sup> Lessius, 1614: 17.

<sup>729</sup> See here ch. 2: 91.

altarpieces establish an ontological relationship between body-spirit, disease-infidelity, health-faith, as well as showing that transformation of physicality and the restoration of health can be achieved through the sacraments, faithfulness to the *Fides Catholica* and the intercession of the saints.

Suffering is also presented as a state that the body should undergo and endure with patience, constancy, hope and faith, as an opportunity for radical moral and spiritual transformation. It is a means of purifying the soul by achieving “moral and spiritual catharsis”.<sup>730</sup> The crucified tortured Christ in the *Ignatius* canvas and the Cross which the angels carry in the *Xavier* painting function as a parallel to the suffering bodies of the canvases and recall that like Christ, who voluntarily suffered on the Cross because of the sins of the humankind, those who suffer in body should in turn voluntarily accept suffering.<sup>731</sup> However, suffering encompasses a transformative power and redemption is to come. The crucified body of Christ has been resurrected and it is in the state of living flesh that it is present in the chalice. The foreshortened body of the possessed man with his legs up, his head down and his hands outstretched recalls St Peter’s upside-down crucifixion and creates a parallel, as well as a contrast, to Christ’s body. Between these two tortured bodies, the chalice and Ignatius suggest that radical bodily and spiritual transformation is feasible through the redemptive power of Eucharistic nourishment (fig. 73).

Moreover, a broadening of the viewpoint from the physical body to the larger political entity is encouraged by the important iconic presence of the princely bodies in the Antwerp church, as discussed earlier. It is helpful to recall here that the altarpieces were painted

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<sup>730</sup> Melling, 1999: 49, 52.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*: 51-52.

during the Twelve-Year Truce between the Northern and the Southern Spanish Netherlands. For the Spanish Netherlands, it was a period of transformation and consolidation of Habsburg rule, and a strengthening of Catholic identity. In this framework, the altarpieces suggest by implication that the durability of the body politic is inextricably linked with the health which is secured through the *Fides Catholica* and the sacraments. This is not to say that the bodies in the paintings function as a metaphor for the body politic in the sense that they materialise in tangible and physical human bodies the invisible and abstract body politic. Instead, they are constitutive members of that body and are also constituted by the larger polity.

This rather ontological relationship is clearly indicated in Jesuit literature. Carolus Scribani, for example, who was not only the Rector of the Jesuit College but also a prolific political writer, in his anti-Machiavellian image of the Christian Prince teaches that a prince must be a real father to his people: “Bonus Princeps nihil differ à bono patre” (“The good prince does not differ from a good father”).<sup>732</sup> Scribani praises Albert as the ideal prince and father of his subjects, a “nobile exemplum”, who not only lived and died as a father, but was also longed for as a father.<sup>733</sup> His subjects desired him as father and cried at his death. Scribani interestingly believes that on the one hand, the prince’s conduct shapes that of his subjects, who follow his example “vt filii patrem” (“like sons their father”), and, on the other hand, that the sons also constitute the well-being of the prince.<sup>734</sup> If fear, Scribani underlines, substitutes for familial love in the relationship, the prince is not recognised anymore as a father. While the benevolence of the subjects contributes to the

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<sup>732</sup> Scribani, 1624: 461. For this treatise, see Bireley, 1990: 162-87; De Bom, 2011.

<sup>733</sup> Scribani, 1624: 442.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid.: 144.

balance of the state, hate brings imbalance and the fall of the body politic.<sup>735</sup> Scribani therefore suggests that the prince and his subjects have an ontological relationship; the one constituted by the other.

Therefore, the healing process, which the diseased bodies of the altarpieces undergo, can also be seen as encapsulating the spiritual and physical transformation of the body politic, the healing of war injuries, and spiritual rejuvenation through the redemptive qualities of the Eucharistic body of Christ. Nevertheless, not all the bodies in the paintings have their health restored. The resurrected are still bluish, the possessed are still screaming uncontrollably, and the paralytics and the blind man are not shown being healed. Are they going to be cured and able to enter the healthy community? *Corpus mysticum* connotes not only inclusion and commonality but also exclusion and the existence of boundaries.<sup>736</sup> Disease still threatens the community and the diseased body is excluded from the sacralised body politic. The threat of the heretical body to destabilise the harmony of the body politic is further supported by the anti-heretical iconographic programme of the ceilings, which, as Knaap has analysed, meant to celebrate Catholicism over heresy.

Nevertheless, the altarpieces support healing the body and not the amputation of the diseased members of the Church/body politic. This is reinforced by the tripartite structure of the paintings, the heavenward motion of the diagonals and the placement of the depicted bodies. Furthermore, the viewer is expected to show trust in the ability of saintly, sacramental and divine power to cure. Even the lowest flesh of the lowest part of the canvases is encouraged towards convalescence and ascension to heaven. In the *Xavier*

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<sup>735</sup> Ibid.: 457.

<sup>736</sup> For this concept, see Beckwith, 1993: 22-44.



canvas the resurrected body can be seen as providing a painterly interpretation of St Paul's eschatological words:

There are bodies that belong to earth and bodies that belong to heaven; and heavenly bodies have one kind of beauty, earthly bodies another. ...one star even differs from another in its beauty. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown corruptible, rises incorruptible; what is sown unhonoured, rises in glory; what is sown in weakness, is raised in power; what is sown a natural body, rises a spiritual body. If there is such a thing as a natural body, there must be a spiritual body too. ...the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise again, free from corruption, and we shall find ourselves changed; this corruptible nature of ours must be clothed with incorruptible life, this mortal nature with immortality. Then, when this mortal nature wears its immortality, the saying of scripture will come true, Death is swallowed up in victory.<sup>737</sup>

The eschatological connotations of the reclining man are further enhanced by the sheaf of grain underneath his body and above the grave. The motif, which also appears in Rubens' *The Resurrected Christ Triumphant* (c. 1615-16, Palazzo Pitti, Florence; figs 74-75), might imply the extremely popular Pauline metaphor of the seed (which also appears in the above extract):

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<sup>737</sup> Paul, I Cor. 15.40-54, 'Catholic Encyclopedia: 1 Corinthians 15', <http://www.newadvent.org/bible/1co015.htm> (accessed 13 June 2014).

when thou sowest seed in the ground, it must die before it can be brought to life; and what thou sowest is not the full body that is one day to be, it is only bare grain, of wheat, it may be, or some other crop; it is for God to embody it according to his will, each grain in the body that belongs to it.<sup>738</sup>

Besides the relationship of wheat with resurrection, new life and the cycle of nature, the proximity of the motif to the high altar of the church and the consecrated Host may also allude to the first element of the Eucharistic food, the wheaten bread, and its properties to renew the body in this life and to secure resurrection in the afterlife.

Whereas the inclusion of this reclining figure within the *corpus mysticum* is secured, the case is more ambivalent for the possessed man, who is pushed by his lower body to cross the canvas, with his head at the very end of the foreground. In the next movement, we might imagine the man to be pushed from the altarpiece. But if he falls out of the canvas, he will find himself upon the high altar of the Jesuit Church. Being encircled by the painted and the real chalice and with the intervention of Ignatius, the oscillation of the man in and out of the *corpus mysticum* is secured. Significantly, the demons flee in the opposite direction, away from the church.

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<sup>738</sup> Ibid.: 35-38. For the popularity of seed images in relation to Resurrection and further references, see Bynum, 1995: 1-17; esp. 3 for the Pauline metaphor.

### Feeding the eye and the nourishing properties of painting

Having explored the physical and spiritual transformation undergone by the human bodies in the altarpieces through their interaction with other sort of bodies – the saintly body, the Eucharistic body of Christ, the crucified body of Christ, the angels, and the incorporeal manifestation of divine power – I wish to examine more closely the interaction of the painterly bodies with the Jesuit audience. Whereas in the previous chapter it was argued that painting aimed at stimulating discussion about crucial political topics and at moving the beholder to make necessary choices, I will suggest here that the altarpieces targeted the spiritual progress of the living bodies within the church by inducing in them a similar process of ontological transformation to that of the painted bodies.

The transformative power that painting and more generally images exert on the viewer received new emphasis in the post-Tridentine era with the Gregorian concept of images as being the books of the illiterate becoming a common *topos*. Catholic treatises encouraged the parallel between the painter and the orator (see chapter 4), thus highlighting the persuasive function of visual material. Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti (1522-97), in his popular treatise (and one of the most extensive Counter-Reformation discourses on painting), advises that painting must struggle to “delight, to instruct, and to move the emotions [*affetto*] of the observer.”<sup>739</sup> However, unlike the art of rhetoric, painting must “persuade persons to piety and order them toward God.” Paleotti explains, it is through “feeding the senses” – especially the sense of sight as being “nobler” than the others – that Christian images move the minds and hearts of entire nations “transforming them and drawing

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<sup>739</sup> Paleotti, 2012 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1582): 110-11.

heavenward”.<sup>740</sup> It is this property of painting, “the transformation of Christian life...*through* vision”, that Paleotti addresses as the prime aim of Christian art.<sup>741</sup> It is the same process (discussed in chapters 2 and 4) of the construction of inner, mental and living images through the stirring of the senses and the imaginative faculty by an external image, but specifically with Christian visual material.<sup>742</sup> The aim of sacred images is the spiritual progress of the individual.

“Feeding the senses” was of central importance for Jesuit teaching. Ignatius Loyola fervently believed that communication with God can be achieved through the senses.<sup>743</sup> In his *Spiritual Exercises* (1548), Ignatius teaches that the construction of mental images and a contemplation of Christ’s life guide the individual to self-examination and discernment (*discretio*) between good and evil. In this way, the faithful make right choices and finally attain spiritual progress and conversion of the soul. Ignatius urges the instructor to provide a short summary of the events, in order for the individual who receives the exercises to recreate a personalised mental image according to the “sight of imagination”.<sup>744</sup> The Jesuits largely supported the use of visual material as a means to facilitate the process of mediation and praise.<sup>745</sup> In this light, Rubens can be seen as a spiritual instructor and mediator, who visually feeds the senses and stirs the imagination, thus facilitating meditation and the construction of mental images.

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<sup>740</sup> Ibid.: 109, 113, 123.

<sup>741</sup> Mitchell, 2009: 38.

<sup>742</sup> Paleotti, 2012: 120-21.

<sup>743</sup> Smith, 2002: 29-39.

<sup>744</sup> See Ignatius Loyola, 1991.

<sup>745</sup> O’Malley et al., 1999, 2006.

The Jesuit fathers, teachers and students, and everybody who was familiar with Ignatius' spiritual exercises, would have experienced the altarpieces as an exercise of contemplation and a means to practice self-examination and personal skills. The altarpieces could thus transform and improve their state of being. However, not all the visitors to the church would have looked at the paintings as spiritual exercises. While the Jesuits constituted a significant part of the audience, it should be kept in mind that the visitors to the church came from a wide spectrum, spanning the higher to the lower strands of society.<sup>746</sup> The less educated were not, of course, expected to use the visual material as a spiritual exercise to improve the self. In that case, the altarpieces were thought to stimulate faith through *imitatio* and to instruct in the basic but fundamental meanings of the Catholic doctrines.

The visual effects, the compositional richness and the dynamic movement of the diagonals, as well as the richness of the emotional, physiological and pathological rendering of the figures on the canvases, aligned to the demands of rhetorical *enargeia*, fed and aroused the senses of a rather heterogeneous audience. The function of *enargeia* is "its ability to move the audience and to make them feel the emotions appropriate to the events described."<sup>747</sup> The emotional density of the altarpieces captures the observer and encourages him/her to share the experience of the suffering of the depicted bodies and the mortification of human flesh. The altarpieces enhance the emotions of the observer: joy for assured eternal health through faith; pity for the suffering; wonder at the miraculous bodily transformations; piety towards the saintly bodies; awe for divine power; anger and repulsion at the infidels, heretics and pagans; consolation for the observer's own

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<sup>746</sup> Knaap, 2006a: 173-75.

<sup>747</sup> Webb, 2009: 90.

sufferings; and fear of contamination, demonic possession and death. The emotive effects move the viewer to experience the reality of the paintings, and as an active participant in the stories to become an eye witness of the miracles and the sanctity of Ignatius and Xavier. The sensual polyphony of the altarpieces was part of a larger celebratory spectacle. It was in front of the altarpieces at the high altar that the priest said the words of consecration and elevated the Host with his two hands. Hearing and sight stimulated the desire to taste the flesh and blood of Christ, smelling the sweetness of the holy meal and touching it only with the mouth.

The transformation of the individual through “feeding the senses” and the process of “seeing” is addressed by Binet, who relates seeing and contemplating to the health of the human body:

Ne regardez pas si souvent le gobelet du Medecin, que le Calice de Iesus Christ, ni la lancette du Chirurgien, que la lancette de Longin, ni le sang qu'on vous tire, que celui qui descelle des playes de nostre Seigneur; ni le fiel de vos breuvages que le vinaigre & l'èponge de nostre Sauveur; ...sa Croix est pour le moins aussi dure que vostre lict, ses bourreaux sans comparaison sont bien plus rudes que tous ceux dont vous vous plaignez & qui vous servent.

(Don't look more often at the goblet of the physician than the chalice of Jesus Christ, the lancet of the surgeon than the lancet of Longinus, your flowing blood than that from the wounds of the Lord; the bitterness of your concoctions than the vinegar and the sponge of our Saviour; ...his Cross is at least as hard as your bed, his executioners are,

without comparison, much more ferocious than all those you are complaining about and who serve you.)<sup>748</sup>

The extract accentuates the importance of “seeing” (“regardez”) with the physical eyes to the contemplation and understanding of disease and healing. According to Binet, the faithful achieve healing and bodily consolation by looking at the living Christ in the chalice and the passion of Christ, and by preferring spiritual to secular medicine. The act of seeing is the first essential step for healing and spiritual catharsis, implying a process from looking with the physical eyes to contemplating with the inner mental eye, the eye of the intellect.

I have already discussed how spiritual transformation was thought to cure physical diseases and affect the psychosomatic body. Nevertheless, it is the power of images to enhance spiritual seeing with the mind’s eye or the eyes of the soul and the creation of mental, living images which explains the importance of visual material to early modern Catholicism.<sup>749</sup> Seeing only with the physical eyes cannot bring spiritual improvement. It is not the act of seeing the chalice that brings health, but eating the body of Christ spiritually as well as physically. It is through the *oculus spiritualis* (“spiritual eye”) and not the senses or imagination, Thomas Aquinas says, that the Eucharistic body of Christ can be reached.<sup>750</sup> Aquinas’ emphasis on the spiritual eye as a means to reach Christ clarifies the proper “seeing”. It simultaneously downplays the ocular seeing of the Host, perceived in

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<sup>748</sup> Binet, 1618: 293.

<sup>749</sup> Chorpennig, 2012; Thompson, 2009; Carruthers, 2008: 276-79.

<sup>750</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 6, art. 7.

the Middle Ages as being almost as important as eating the Host and being greatly encouraged by the feast of Corpus Christi.<sup>751</sup>

While the transformative power of painting through the act of seeing was frequently discussed, ecclesiastical authorities do not give clear guidelines on how the painter should stir the senses, the mental eye, and the personalised genesis of inner images. However, what is frequently underlined is the great difficulty for the painter in making a perfect sacred image and the huge responsibility to “stamp the true cult of God and the greatness of eternal things into the folk” and to transform them like a “celestial minister”.<sup>752</sup> This is an extremely hard task, demanding “divine assistance”. The painter who successfully creates sacred images is therefore an intercessor between the terrestrial and the celestial. The task of the painter is to make human nature ascend to the divine by mediating divine truths. Through sacred images the principal end of the Christian painter is “to win divine grace”, while through the grace of the artist painting becomes “an act of virtue...ascends to a grander end, aiming at eternal glory and endeavoring to recall men from vice and bring them to the true cult of God.”<sup>753</sup>

Besides being a celestial minister and divine assistant, the Christian painter is also a nourisher, who must feed the folk with the good healthy food of Catholic faith. Paleotti argues against scandalous pictures which are food for the heretical. Quoting St Basil, Paleotti says “heretics are like vultures, who ignore good healthy food and nourish

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<sup>751</sup> There is plenty material to evidence that the faithful ran from church to church only to see the Elevation of the Host. See Bynum, 2006; 2007: 87; Rubin, 1991; see also the still important study by Dumoutet, 1926.

<sup>752</sup> Paleotti, 2012: 123.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.: 108.



themselves exclusively on stinking cadavers and corpses.”<sup>754</sup> Errors and falsehoods in paintings cause diseases and are

like infirmities of the body: although they are caused by an imbalance of the humors, they take the name of the body part they harm the most...errors in pictures, contaminating all subjects in various ways, take their denomination from the species to which they have spread. Hence, some pictures are labeled vain, and others monstrous, or inept, or apocryphal, or superstitious.<sup>755</sup>

Since, when heretical, painting can contaminate audiences with disease and even imprint “poison into the senses”, the artist is highly responsible for the health and nourishment of the audience.<sup>756</sup> The title-page of the second part of Jan David’s *Veridicus Christianus (Orbita probitatis, ad Christi Imitationem*; fig. 76) depicts ten painters during the act of painting, showing them prone to mistakes and errors against the Christian faith.<sup>757</sup> While Christ with the Cross stands in front of them as their model, only one painter achieves a faithful depiction of Christ as He really appears. Some of them are inspired to paint other Christological scenes, whereas others paint completely irrelevant topics. A painter illustrates a man with a purse in his hand, implying that he prioritises financial gain. Another painter, at the left foreground, looks toward Christ but paints the

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<sup>754</sup> Ibid.: 162.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid.: 163-64.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid.: 167.

<sup>757</sup> David, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1601.

Devil. The image is clearly metaphorical and relates painterly mimesis to *imitatio Christi*, with the painters standing for believers. The meaning is that the faithful should mirror, imitate and represent Christ. The accompanying text from St Augustine explicitly articulates the idea of *imitatio Christi*: “Christiani nomen ille frustra sortitur, qui Christum minime imitatur” (“He who imitates Christ to the minimum obtains in vain the Christian name”). It also relates ocular seeing to spiritual vision. Whereas the image should not be seen as being exclusively addressed to painters, it does encourage a painter-observer to firstly imitate Christ in order to achieve a faithful depiction.

In the light of the above discussion, it might therefore be asked by which means the Jesuit altarpieces stimulated the viewer to experience the reality of painting and whether this can be considered as “an act of virtue”. Is the painter finally a mediator between humanity and divinity and a nourisher of the audience? Also, how does the observer ascend to the celestial sphere? Besides the emotional arousal caused by the sensual polyphony of the painted figures, the viewer is captivated by a profound engagement with the ontology of the human body: questions of *being* and *becoming*. It is the meticulous rendering of the human outer and inner state and the tripartite compositional structure from the terrestrial to the celestial sphere which move the viewer to contemplate human corporeality, matters of disease and health, the unity of the body, soul and mind, the interconnectedness of physical and spiritual sickness, the oscillation between materiality and immateriality, and finally the transcendence of the weakness of human flesh and the ascent to the divine sphere. The viewer is also guided to contemplate the several transformations of the human body and its relationship to other sorts of bodies, such as the

semi-divine saintly bodies, the bodies of the angels and demons, the crucified Christ and the Eucharistic body of Christ.

By organising the compositional structure of the altarpieces in three parts, Rubens creates a ladder from the lower materiality of the human body to the highest spirituality.<sup>758</sup> In terms of Aristotelian *actuality* (*energeia*), in combination with Christian soteriology, this ladder can be seen as leading to the “final cause” or *telos* – the salvation of humanity from sin and temporal suffering – and thus to the *entelecheia* of the human being (the state of being when the final *telos* has been achieved after the process of actuality).<sup>759</sup> From this point of view, the tripartite gradation of the bodies discloses the *potentiality* and capability of the human being to transcend humble corporeality and suffering and to ascend to the upper levels of spirituality and deification. The crucified body of Christ and the resurrected living flesh of the chalice underline the potential for salvation for human bodies. The multi-level structure of the painting and the activated process of transformation of the human bodies challenge the observer to participate in this ascension of human flesh.

The crucified Christ captures the beholder of the image in an ambiguous process of seeing between potentiality and actuality. It is not quite clear whether the body of Christ is visible to the painted laity in the form of an altarpiece, or whether this is supposed to be a vision revealed to the viewer outside the image, who is thus enabled to see through and beyond the image. The crucified Christ encourages the observer to wonder whether

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<sup>758</sup> The concept of a ladder to ascend and reach God is frequently met within contemporary discussions. It receives special attention from Cardinal Bellarmine in the title of his treatise *De ascensione mentis in Deum per scalas rerum creatorum opusculum* (1614). The book suggests a ladder with fifteen steps/chapters by which the mind ascends to God.

<sup>759</sup> For Aristotle’s ontology, see indicatively Kosman, 2013; Beere, 2009; Witt, 2003. I thank Prof. Georgios Farantos for our discussion of these concepts.

“seeing” Christ has actually been achieved, or whether what is seen is the possibility of “seeing”. Yet, what heightens the experience of the audience is the vivid process of conversion of the suffering bodies. The resurrected in *Xavier* and the possessed in *Ignatius* are captured in a process of transformation and *becoming*, in a state in-between death and life, demonic possession and convalescence. It is a movement of change in *being*, from psychosomatic disease to health, as part of a transcendental process towards salvation. The process of *actuality* is suggested by implication by the bodies of the possessed, since the angels, the divine light and the removal of demons connote the success of the miracle. However, it is the very materiality of the resurrected bodies that manifests this process. This process of *becoming* is integrated into the masterful handling of the pigments and oils of the bodies’ flesh in a state between life and death, putrefaction and resurrection. If the touch of the painter is considered good when he paints “viue” (“vividly”) and “bien la carnation du nud” (“nicely the incarnation of the flesh”), as Binet believes, Rubens excels here by capturing the transformation of the flesh.<sup>760</sup>

By rendering the living processes of the human body, the hand of the painter enlivens the lifeless materials of the paintings. In the *Xavier* painting, the protruded veins at the neck of the man in the foreground and the hand of the man above him, as well as some more pinkish parts of the flesh, suggest that physiological processes and the blood’s circulation are under change and restoration. The transformative flesh integrates the rejuvenating and healing properties of the holy food. Yet, paint is also food. It is the matter which nourishes and constructs the painted body. It also partakes of the healing properties of the Eucharistic food, since it ontologically transforms and heals both the body and soul

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<sup>760</sup> Binet, 1632 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1621): 340.

of the painted figures and also of the observers through the act of seeing. Nevertheless, it is the living flesh of the painter that feeds and transforms the painted bodies and gives them new life. It is through this process that Rubens becomes not only the parent of these bodies, the nourisher and nurse, but also the “true Author” of the body.<sup>761</sup> In his argument that only God is the true maker and parent of human beings, Italian Jesuit professor at Louvain University (1570-76) and later Cardinal, Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), writes that “if the parents of thy flesh were the true Authors...when the body is sicke, or a member withered or cut off, they could certainly by the same art by which they made it, againe repaire it”.<sup>762</sup> In this sense, healing and curing the body challenges the authorship of the human body and encourages the comparison of the painter with the “true author” of the body.

This vivification of the painted human body through the process of *actuality* and *becoming* captivates and energises the ocular and spiritual vision of the observer and further pursues an overall transformation of the beholder. Furthermore, through the interaction of the painterly bodies with the living bodies of the audience the materiality of painting is enlivened in a new, living and perpetually changing context. Therefore, the materiality of the canvas is not a barrier to spirituality, but a means to transform the body and ascend the spiritual ladder. The altarpieces do not simply instruct in the transformative power of the sacraments and the saints through divine intervention, they also pursue a fundamental transformation of the bodies of the audience in the church.

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<sup>761</sup> For the way Rubens claimed the parenthood of his painterly bodies through his masterful depiction of maternal milk, as well as for an insight into the metamorphic qualities of paint in relation to life-bearing human liquids, see Thøfner, forthcoming, 2015.

<sup>762</sup> Bellarmine, 1616: 6; de Ridder-Symoens, 1992-2011, vol. 2: 494, 506.

The several processes of transformation from the painted bodies to the living bodies accentuate the transformative power and the rejuvenating properties of painting. The painter is suggested not only as being able to transform the materials into life-like human bodies, but more importantly as being able to convert and nourish the living bodies of the audience. That role makes the painter a nourisher, physician and surgeon; both a spiritual and a physical healer. The painter is a “celestial minister” receiving divine assistance and mediating between the celestial and the terrestrial.

## CONCLUSION

This study has crossed traditional boundaries between academic disciplines to reach a new, comprehensive view of Rubens' human bodies. A novel approach has been developed by integrating history of art and history of medicine to explore the *whole* body according to the specific qualities of each image. The thesis has not subsumed the painted body to pre-given, extraneous concepts, such as for example a pre-defined medical condition or a specific part/organ of the human body. My approach has thus adhered to Jonathan Culler's view that the context is *produced*.<sup>763</sup> In each case study visibility and materiality, and the endogenous and exogenous interactions they produce, have guided the synthesis of disciplines. Each image has modified the interpretative framework, bringing together further disciplines and rich material from other fields in the humanities and sciences. Sociology, politics, religion, philosophy, literature, cartography and cosmography have been used as far as the reality of the images encouraged this.

Whereas the basic premise of this thesis is that medical understanding and basic knowledge of physiology and biological processes inform depicted bodies – especially in the case of a *bene doctus*, as Rubens was – *how* these are integrated into visibility and materiality has been suggested to vary from body to body. Not all bodies are the same and therefore each of them has impelled a different medical discussion. Not all bodies produce, and are produced in, the same context. Explanatory categories and cross-references to other disciplines were modified. Adopting such a methodology is aligned to the core belief of this thesis that, especially when the case studies are visual, the argumentative trajectory should be guided *by* the images. In other words, the methodology grows from the images.

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<sup>763</sup> See ch. 5: 217.

As Thomas Crow has argued, “the object invites and prefigures its analysis; half the genius of the interpreter lies in recognizing that invitation.”<sup>764</sup>

The medical perspective of this thesis, therefore, is not based on a strict model, but is quite fluid. Whereas in many cases a synthesis of medical and art historical approaches examine the rendering of Rubens’ bodies, in some other cases the discussion draws on medicine alone in order to provide an understanding of concepts. The thesis addressed various early modern medical topics, ranging from a close physiological analysis of the painted body and the physicality of the materials and brush technique, to a reconsideration of the painting process. The body of the painter and the body of the beholder attracted special attention. Some topics were discussed extensively, such as the enmeshment and exchange of medicine and painting, mental and bodily balance, the challenges of disease, age and corporeality, humoral imbalance and contrasting temperaments, supernatural disease, cures and spiritual medicine. Moreover, the thesis has shed light on how non-medical circles understood and experienced bodily functions, and how artists manipulated these in order to maximise the persuasiveness of images.

In addition to this interdisciplinary approach, the thesis has contended that developing a conversation between visibility, materiality and textuality greatly contributes to the understanding of images. Emphasis has been given to how these facets complement each other, and the coalescences or conflicts among them. Again, this relationship between image, matter and text was not predefined, but structured according to each artwork and redefined from work to work. By bringing together the smallest painterly details of pigments, chalks and oils, biological processes, imagery and larger societal contexts, the

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<sup>764</sup> Crow, 1999: 5.



major aim of this study has been to fill the lack of a broader, systematic study of Rubens' bodies via a medical perspective. While at the beginning of the previous decade Ulrich Heinen opened up discussions on the meeting of physiology and philosophy in Rubens' human bodies, it was only recently with the international conference on *Rubens and the Human Body* that Rubens' interface with medicine was revisited and received significant attention.<sup>765</sup> The big project which is currently in progress at the Rubenianum on Rubens' engagement with anatomy (*Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, XX*) has made more obvious the necessity for a study of Rubens' broader medical rendering of the human body, physiology and pathology. The thesis responds to this demand, without, of course, having the ambition to be an exhaustive study on this topic. The necessity of the present study is further intensified by Rubens' fervent interest in bodily balance and health matters.

The examination of early modern medical and ontological views of the body has greatly profited our understanding of the painted body. The perception of the body as a psychosomatic unity, in which the state of the body, soul and mind affect each other, and as a permeated entity in a continuous process of exchanging fluids with the environment, has offered insights into the early modern painted body. Such a perception encourages a view of the painted body beyond dead matter, and gives us access to immaterial qualities. Consequently, the outer body has been approached as being permeated by spiritual values which shape, and are shaped by, external appearance. In this framework, the thesis has argued that discussion on the physicality of the depicted body should not be restricted to the bodily image, but needs to expand to the relationship between inner and outer body, image, character and behaviour.

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<sup>765</sup> 17-18 September 2010, University of York, organised by Dr Cordula van Wyhe; van Wyhe (ed.), 2015b, forthcoming.

Furthermore, by looking at the body as a psychosomatic unity, constructed by the fluid relationship between matter and spirit, this thesis has challenged views of the painted body as a metaphor or sign. The early modern body was in a reciprocal relationship with larger societal bodies, such as the body politic and the *corpus mysticum*. However, there is still much hesitancy in current literature to view the painted body as being constitutive of these relations. Through this thesis, I wish to encourage this investigative avenue by proposing a view of the body placed back within its early modern ontological framework. Particular emphasis has been paid to the painted body as part of larger social interactions. It has been approached not only as being shaped by the individual characteristics of the painter and its interactions with society, but also as a “multi-dimensional medium for the constitution of society”.<sup>766</sup> I have suggested that the painted body is an active agent capable of shaping the beholder’s body and moving it to action. It is these endogenous and exogenous interactions among a series of bodies, imagery and materiality, which produce a living context and disclose the subjectivity of the painted body.

The argumentative voice of painting generates multiple meanings and functions. The present study underlined painting as a living presence of the sitter, and the relationship between sitter and painter. It explored painting as stimulating discussion and as having great persuasive force to shape opinions and provoke changes in the beholder’s passions and character. It was also suggested that painting was expected to have an important impact on the daily experience of elite circles and “ordinary” people, and also to have the potential to bring about a fundamental metamorphosis of the beholder’s body, and even to cure the soul and body. Paint matter has been proposed not only as being enmeshed with

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<sup>766</sup> Shilling, 2005: see e.g. p.11.

meaning, but also as often shaping the discussion. It has been shown that materiality is not an obstacle to accessing immateriality, but instead it is the physicality of matter and the brush which disclose immaterial concepts, mental traits and spiritual properties, or, as Rubens' contemporaries would say, the "movements of the soul and mind".

Nevertheless, the present study has accentuated some limitations. While at the beginning of this research the well-used term in Rubens' studies, "the Rubensian body", looked adequate, the richness of inner and outer physicality, and the multivalence and polyphony of Rubens' bodies accentuated the limitations of the term. Subsuming Rubens' bodies in one and the same category described by a generic term appears to be superficial and therefore misleading, unless the term, which has always carried connotations of the fleshy female nude, is tremendously expanded to include many more categories of bodies. But then, what is the need for such a broad label?

Furthermore, an initial idea of this project was to correct the overemphasis on Holland, Italy and France in the history of medicine by focusing firmly on the Southern, Spanish Netherlands – a region which has suffered remarkable scholarly neglect in many aspects of early modern studies. However, the exploration of Rubens' library, medical knowledge and painting, as well as his international friendships, suggested that Rubens' human figures embody an international flair, which cannot be approached within narrow national and religious boundaries. Moreover, Rubens' case raises the issue for potential, future research on whether, and how, wider European medical views of the body converged with the medical knowledge in the Spanish Netherlands. It also reaffirms early modern Antwerp as a knowledge hub.

Finally, the interdisciplinary approach also poses limitations. The fact that Rubens was one of the most erudite artists of the early modern period encourages a consideration of whether, and to what extent, the present perspective can be applied to human bodies of other artists. To give an explicit answer to this question is out of the scope of the present discussion and runs the risk of over-generalisation. Rubens' engagement with medicine and biological processes was not typical for his period. Yet the fact that a basic physiological understanding of the body was achieved even by the uneducated, and the principle that an individual should know their body in order to keep it healthy, proposes the validity of a medical viewpoint even for less-educated artists. It was not necessary for an artist to have a profound interest in medicine and keep a huge library of medical books in order to depict, for example, a possessed person, putrefied flesh, a body full of vigour or in humoral imbalance.

Additionally, by working closely with matter and biological processes, further practical limitations have been identified. While this thesis encourages a close exploration of matter, this could not always be achieved at the desirable level. There are many factors which prevent a close inspection of a painting. Human, environmental and ageing effects often distort the initial state of matter. In some cases, it was extremely difficult to collect information on the technical condition of a painting. In these cases, large conclusions and detailed discussions of materiality were avoided. Nevertheless, access to conservation details and examination reports have proved extremely valuable, and discussions with museums and galleries should, I believe, be pursued and expanded.

It has been my hope that this thesis may encourage communication between institutes and disciplines. I would like to see an adequately contextualised medical perspective on the

human body open the way for further discussions on the medical rendering of the visualised body, the subjectivity of painting and the meshing of materiality, immateriality and textuality. I also hope that the thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the early modern body by largely dispensing with retrospective views of the body and by thinking instead in terms familiar to the early modern mentality.

This thesis also aims to motivate us to rethink Rubens' bodies, thus triggering further exploration of several medical aspects which could not be addressed within the limits of the present study. These include the discussion of gender in the light of medicine, anatomy and physiology, a broader discussion on the representation of age, and an exploration of issues in relation to death and birth. Another fruitful topic of future research is how early modern obstetrics may have influenced the shape and physiological rendering of the female body. Further questions can be asked about the extent to which medical conventions concerning the physicality of the body penetrated Rubens' biographies and the other discourses regarding the early modern artist. While the opening quotation of this thesis indicated Rubens' interest in the outer human body, the present discussion has emphasised that the beauty of the outer body cannot be properly understood when detached from inner physicality and spirituality.