Rudolf Kuhn

On Composition as Method and Topic

Studies on the work of L. B. Alberti, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rubens, Picasso, Bernini and Ignaz Günther

Tel Aviv Lectures

With respect and gratitude
for Zvi Yavetz
who first opened to me the path to Israel and Tel Aviv

and for
Natan Simon Cassuto, Avinoam Shalem
Smadar Sheffi, Hillay Zmora
Tamar Cholcman, Eylam Langotsky, Eran Tiefenbrunn
Lior Wohlfeiler, Uri Yiftach
Tamar Ashuri, Shaul Zaban, Eli Bar-Chen
Racheli Kaliblotzki, Amos Ben-Aharon
Asaf Ichilevich, Yaron Jean
Rakefet Jadwiga Zalashik, Yitzak Nitzan Lebovic
Yasmin Ariela Dotan, Ilanit Chodnic-Ilia, Gideon Reuveni
Tali Konas, Itai Peleg
Shelley Zer-Zion, Amir David Bernstein
who followed the path and studied in Munich.

CONTENT

PREFACE

This book discusses the composition in the paintings of Michelangelo, Raphael, Rubens and Picasso; it discusses the contribution of composition to the representation of subject matter in painting. In the case of Raphael and Rubens, it examines how a composition was conceived and worked out. It also deals with the comprehension of composition in the treatise of Leon Battista Alberti, in comparison to the reflections on composition by Cennini, Lionardo and Dolce. The last chapter aims at qualifying the paintings of Lionardo, Michelangelo and Raphael, according to their specific rank, as 'Classic'.

The seven chapters include parts from my book *Komposition und Rhythmus*, contributions to *Festschriften* and discourses from anthologies and journals, the references of which are all cited in the text. The selected sections were translated into English and prepared as lectures, which I delivered in Tel Aviv University between the years 1986 and 1992. For this reason, when compared with the original texts, the extent and numbers of footnotes are varied. Nevertheless, the selection and the arranging of the texts in this book have the intention of shedding light on the significance and the virtue of the Art of Composition in painting, as well as presenting the analysis of Composition as a method of interpreting works of art. A further study, which concerns the problem of composition in sculpture, brings into discussion sculptures made by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Ignaz Günther and appears in the appendix of this book. This study was first read as a paper in a conference organised by Irving Lavin at the American Academy in Rome.

The translations of these texts were made by three translators: David Britt, Michael Foster and John W. Gabriel, and I would like to express my thanks to them for the efforts that they put in bringing these texts to their final English versions. There are some discrepancies in the various translations, particularly in the translation of terms. However, I do see the advantage of it because, I think that, it demonstrates the difficulty in finding the proper English terminology for the certain German terms which appear in my text.

Above all, I would like to thank Professor Zvi Yavetz from Tel Aviv University, at one time a visiting professor at Munich University, who first had the idea of me giving these lectures at his home university. As time passes, our relationship turned into friendship, also a friendship between our families. This resulted in an invitation to Israel in 1986 and, later on, in several others, in which these lectures were held. For all of this, I am ever so grateful to him, and my thanks are expressed in the dedication of this book

Subsequently it became clear that several students of the Hebrew University, and especially the Tel Aviv University, wish to study history, art history, German literature and Drama in the University of Munich. The city of Munich provided then an annual grant to support the studies of an Israeli student in Munich. I would like to thank Studiendirektor Rainer W. Döbrich from the Schul- and Kultusreferat of the Landeshauptstadt Munich for his help in establishing this scholarship as well as for his constant support. The University of Munich established in turn a further scholarship, which is annually awarded to a second Israeli student. The latter was supplemented each year by an additional support, for which I would like to express my thanks to the following persons: Mr. Rudolf Bayer (Bankhaus H. Aufhäuser), Mr. Peter Ellegast (F. W. Woolworth Deutschland), Dr. Wolfgang Beck (C. H. Beck Verlag) and Dr. Hubert Burda (Hubert Burda Medien Holding). Last but not at least, I would like to thank Mr. Rainer Kohmann, the director of the academic office for foreign students at the University of Munich, and Mrs. Monique-Claudine Esnouf, who, for the last twelve years, steadily took care of the scholarship students from Israel.

I would like also to thank some colleagues in Israel: Prof. Zvi Yavetz, Prof. Shulamit Volkov and Prof. Dan Dinner, who chose between the candidates for this scholarship each year.

A special thank goes also to the scholarship students, who spent an academic year at the University of Munich and whose presence in our house, caused a great pleasure to my wife and me. For this reason their names appear in the dedication of my Tel Aviv Lectures.

1. MICHELANGELO'S BATTLE OF CASCINA AND GREAT FLOOD ANALYSES OF COMPOSITION[1]

It is my aim in these lectures to focus on (a specific aspect, or more precisely method, of 'reading' pictures, namely on) the role of composition in narrative paintings dated from the Renaissance era to Modern times. This includes several discussions: First, on the general aspect of what the significance of composition in the representation of the subject matter is. Second, as far as the artist's process is concerned, how composition is first conceived and step by step realised. Third, how composition was comprehended in the tractate of Leon Battista Alberti in comparison to reflections on composition by Cennino Cennini, Lionardo da Vinci and Ludvico Dolce. The discussions have the aim of presenting the analysis of composition as a method of reading pictures. The paintings chosen in these lectures were selected from works of Michelangelo, Raphael, Rubens and Picasso.

I would like to start then by analysing the composition of two paintings, through which it will become clear both what composition in these paintings is - at least to my understanding - and what composition achieves in the representation of subject matters. The paintings chosen here are two works of Michelangelo: *The Departure for the Battle of Cascina*, a theme with which each of you who served in the army might be familiar, and *The Great Flood*, a Biblical subject which is kept green in our collective memory, Christians and Jews alike.

[1] Translated from the German by Michael Foster.

THE DEPARTURE FOR THE BATTLE OF CASCINA BY MICHELANGELO[2]

Michelangelo received the commission for this work from the Gonfaloniere of the Florentine Republic, Pier Soderini. In the Sala del Consiglio of the Palazzo Vecchio, opposite frescoes commissioned from Leonardo, he was to depict further scenes from the history of his native town and - as Michelangelo himself conceived it - to praise Florentine watchfulness and agility, readiness for battle and determination, as a reminder to the assembled civic representatives. Michelangelo started designing the lefthand fresco on the longer of the two walls, working on the composition from 1504 to 1506. Work did not progress beyond the overall drawing on a large-scale cartoon. This cartoon is lost. The main section - perhaps the whole - of the composition is known from a small grisaille copy (fig. 1), probably by Bastiano da Sangallo, who in 1542 was induced to copy the cartoon by Giorgio Vasari. The grisaille is on wood and measures 77 x 133 cm[3]. Isermeyer has worked out the size of the original cartoon as 432 x 746 cm[4].

The scene depicts how Manno Donati, wide-eyed with fright and armed with a spear, arrives suddenly among his comrades: "Noi siamo perduti" (Filippo Villani, *Cronaca*, XI, 97[5]). The soldiers, rising and climbing out of the Arno onto its banks, dressing and hurrying, blowing and finally starting out for battle, look, scent, point and seek danger to the left, right, front and rear.

---

[2] Translated from Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus. Beiträge zur Neubegründung einer Historischen Kompositionslehre* (Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, ed. Bandmann, Hubala, Schöne vol. 15). Berlin, pp. 63sqq.

[3] Michelangelo, *The departure for the battle of Cascina*, 1504-06, Grisaille copy probably by Bastiano da Sangallo, 1542, 77 x 133 cm, Holkham Hall, Earl of Leicester.

[4] Christian-Adolf Isermeyer, "Die Arbeiten Leonardos und Michelangelos für den großen Ratssaal in Florenz. Eine Revision der Bild- und Schriftquellen für Ihre Rekonstruktion und Geschichte", *Studien zur Toskanischen Kunst, Festschrift für Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich zum 23. März 1963*, München 1964, pp. 83 - 130.

[5] *Croniche di Giovanni, Matteo e Filippo Villani*, ed. A. Racheli, vol. 2, Triest 1958.

Witnesses to the faithfulness of the copy appear to confirm (Marc Antonio Raimondi[6]) or at least to indicate (Giorgio Vasari[7]), that the looks and gestures of the soldiers on the left were directed at an enemy patrol emerging from a wood in the middle ground at the far left and, further, that the soldiers starting out on the right merged into a cavalry battle. The composition as preserved in the grisaille neither requires, nor excludes the possibility of completion.

How is the scene composed? In front, with three large groups; above and behind, with a row of figures.

The groups are formed into figure complexes. What does this term signify? The first figure complex, on the left, consists of one soldier climbing up out of the water, a second one bending down to it and a third one straightening up. These are the motifs. The figural characters are: bending upwards to the right in an arc (left-hand figure) and bending downwards to the left in a shorter arc (right-hand figure). In this way these two figures echo one another in opposing arcs and are firmly linked. From the point where they almost touch, the centre, there rises the third figure. The group is thus centralised, its movements governed by the centre and its figures emphasising that centre. It is a figure complex. It is the same with the second complex. One figure sits on the bank, turned to the right; another stands, bending down to the left to look into the Arno. The opposing movements of both are directed towards the centre. A third figure sits on the bank, looking up at this centre. Echoing him, a fourth, crouching figure rises from the same central focal point. Finally, Donati arrives, breaking through the other figures, covering them and, with the arc of his arms, tightening up the whole. In this way the five figures together form a centralised figure complex. It is the same, finally, with the five figures on the right: two pairs of echoing figures above and below a central one.

The composition as a whole is built up from three adjacent figure complexes and, above them, a row of figures, now straightening up, now leaning to the left or right, now hurrying. The two components are fundamentally different in rhythm: centralised rhythmic impulses in the figure complexes as opposed to sequential ones in the figures above.

---

[6] Marc Antonio Raimondi, Kupferstich *Les Grimpeurs* (B 487).

[7] Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori ed Architettori*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, Florence 1878 sqq., VII, 160.

How, then, is the action arranged, how represented?

The first figure complex: The rhythmic impulses of the first figure are as follows. The right leg leads straight up and the left foot up to the right, while the left lower leg recedes up to the left and the left thigh approaches up to the right.

All these movements are concise and sharp, growing proportionally. There follows the back, widely arching to the right, and the bent arm, lowered out of parallel to the arch of the back in a shorter arc. Finally, the head is turned to one side with the face raised to the left. These rhythmic impulses are stages in the body's movement: from standing in the water and raising the knee to the edge of the bank to bending and leaning on the ground while lifting knee, head and gaze upwards. The rhythmic impulses embody the physical and psychological state of the figure.

The rhythmic impulses of the second figure are as follows. The foot recedes, slightly raised to the left, while the lower leg comes forwards and downwards to the right. Next to it, the thigh rises forcefully to the left in a movement that continues across the buttocks, along the back and right upper arm until the right elbow almost touches the preceding figure. It then turns abruptly down to the right in the tensely supporting right forearm. The head, slanted in a different direction, is underpinned and drawn downwards by the left arm stretching far down to the water. Thus, the figure kneeling on the bank has bent forwards, supported himself and looked into the water before preparing to take hold. A sudden turning movement is captured in the heads of the first two figures. This is more characteristic of Michelangelo than, say, of Leonardo or Raphael. Nevertheless, the figures echo each other in their figural characters and in the rhythm of their movements: moving from water to land and from land to water, leaning inwards and leaning outwards, they echo one another in restrained, yet broad gestures.

These echoing figures are fashioned into a group by a third, who turns abruptly in another direction. Crouching on his toes, sitting tightly with his thigh on his sharply bent lower leg and clothed in closely fitting trousers, this man has suddenly straightened up his torso in a frontal position. Energetically supporting his bent arm on his left knee, he stretches out his right arm straight from the shoulder, pointing backwards to the left and raising his head and ear in that direction. Here, too, the rhythmic movements embody the physical and psychological state of the figure: in trousers that still cling to him he turns and points in the direction of what he has heard. In its stages of crouching, straight-

ening up and extending its arm this figure is fashioned differently from the first two. In them, a change of direction does not occur until the head, and the total movement of the figures comes to a standstill or becomes less emphatic. In contrast, the third figure already changes direction at the waist and in such a way that stomach, chest and arms thrust up and out with increased energy above the legs, which are held together tightly.

However, what is decisive for the figure complex as a whole is not the change in direction captured in individual figures, nor the distinction in figural character between two bending figures and one straightening up, but rather how the third figure is placed in relation to the others. The quiet parallel arcs of the first two figures' bodies echo each other as they move towards the land and bend down to the water respectively. In the group thus taking shape the close give-and-take of their legs is opened up by a third figure straightening up from the point where the others nearly meet and pointing away from the group. If the abrupt difference of direction, movement and rhythmic impulse represents the psychological state of each figure, then this is even more applicable to the group as a whole. The community of two bathing comrades established expressively by their echoing forms is shattered and abruptly directed outwards by the man who, having heard a noise, rises attentively, making both himself and his comrades aware of the danger. The abruptly different rhythm of this figure represents an abruptly different psychological state.

Above the third figure there stands a man who, turning to the right while quickly throwing on his shirt, begins the row of figures hurriedly dressing and arming themselves, rushing to battle and urging on their fellows.

The construction of the second figure complex is still more remarkable, being the transformation of a group of four figures into one of five. The first figure sits on the bank. His dangling leg is varied in the other one drawn up to the edge of the bank. The rounded stomach issues from his waist. Further to the right, the shoulder is turned and the arm stretched out to clasp a cloth, so that the back protrudes. The head is turned the most, presenting an exact rear-view. The second figure stands on the shore. He leans forward a long way in order to look into the Arno. He supports himself on his bent left leg, which is pushed back, and with his right leg advances to the edge of the bank. Lowering his shoulder somewhat, he lifts his bent arms sideways. His fingers, too, are bent and spread out in shock. These first two figures echo each other in a number of ways. In comparison with the other members of the group, both are hardly overlapped at all by other figures. They both turn, or lean, from a threequarter view

into a rear view - of the head and back respectively. They both face inwards, towards the centre of the group. And they both move in space, receding or approaching. Once again, the rhythmic impulses of the figures are identical with their movements and constitute the individual motif.

The next two figures likewise echo one another. The third sits, the fourth crouches on the ground. Both are overlapped by other figures and both are *en face*, even if the energetic movement and the head of the man leaning down to the Arno obscure the third figure's face above the mouth. This is unusual in this style of composition and is a feature in which the third and fourth figures do not echo each other. The third figure is sitting, inclined slightly to his left and with his right leg slightly bent. He leans forward, supporting his arching torso on his arms. In turning his head to the front over his shoulder his face catches the light. He alone of all the figures is completely at rest. The fourth figure crouches, its lower leg and thigh moving to the left and then up to the right. The torso arches to the left. His upper arm is extended and the forearm raised to grasp the cloth wound round his head and wind it into a turban. He inclines his head in the opposite direction in order to find out what is being said.

The fifth and most powerful figure of the group, Manno Donati, echoes no-one. Emerging frontally from the rear and wide-eyed with terror, he leans over his comrades with his arms raised in a semi-circle. In his left hand he holds a spear, ready for battle but not attacking.

In the first, third and fourth figures a change in direction again occurs with the turning of the head. This slight, jolting change halts the continuous flow of movement, collects the psychological expression and serves to round off the figure. In the second and fifth figures - the man leaning down to the Arno and Manno Donati - a directional change is replaced by a dynamic one, accomplished by an increase in, or broadening of, volume. In the man leaning towards the Arno the upward movement of the legs is turned sharply to the left in the bending back. The back then broadens out as far as the arms with which, bent and spread out like wings, the man reaches forward to the very edge of the bank, even though he is frozen with fright. Similarly, with the help of his arms and the drapery, Donati appears from behind in stages of increasing volume, like a shout as he comes bodily between and above his comrades.

In the central figure complex two pairs of figures echo one another just as two single ones had echoed each other in the left-hand group. And just as there a third figure straightened up, setting him apart from the others, so here a fifth figure comes forward between and above the others. Ready-armed and

guarding watchfully, he cries in fright, "*noi siamo perduti*". Beneath Donati one recognises the *sono perduto* in the hands of the man drowning in the Arno. He sinks down below as the soldiers rise to their feet above.

As Donati arrives between his comrades, overshadowing them, the standing man leans over towards his perishing comrade. What Donati, pale with fear, foresees, the other, frozen with fear, actually sees below him. In this way the excitement of Donati's arrival is conveyed to the others, continuing in the standing man's leaning forward. The abrupt physical and psychological change signified by Donati's vehement arrival and the sudden leaning forward of the standing man are made visible, are rendered perceptible, by a disruption of the constellation of four echoing figures. This disruption is occasioned by the obscuring of the face of the single resting youth sitting on the shore by the head of the man who sees his comrade actually perishing. If one has studied and come to feel the measured regularity of echoing individual figures in the left-hand group, then one notices all the more this disruption of the intervals and balancings in the central group by the head of the standing man. This head is pushed forward from a position roughly in front of the figure's upper elbow, giving way to Donati's fear, disturbing the peace of the seated youth and allowing the man himself to see his comrade perishing.

Once again, abrupt physical change embodies abrupt psychological change, i.e. the vehement arrival of danger and the giving way to this vision in the disruption of peace and the perception of actual downfall.

But what does it mean actually to perish? The surprise motif of the hands pleading for help in the Arno serves to give this concrete visible shape. It is not a fully formed figure, simply a pair of hands. Formally, they lie outside the figure complexes and rows from which the composition is constructed, are detached from them. Rhythmically, they do not arch or turn abruptly, but form stationary points. These hands are the fundamental surprise of the composition. In them, the figural, formal and rhythmic basis of the composition is relinquished and released in an event-like manner important from the thematic point of view. For this motif of the hands demonstrates that perishing is real and also what perishing really is - namely, being reduced to a pair of supplicating hands, sinking from the society of equals, being removed from the perfection of group and community to a position below them.

Separated thus, there follows the third figure complex on the right. A youth reclines on the ground, looking out for danger around him. With his back to this second figure, the first sits on the ground and energetically pulls his hose

onto his right leg. These two figures echo one another and, as in the figure complex on the left, they are crowned, dominated and fashioned into a group by a third figure. His cloak blowing in the wind, his bundle of clothes under his arm and a stick in his hand, this third figure rushes in over the first, watching the others as he prepares to join them. The group is expanded into one of five by a second pair of echoing figures. The fourth figure is turned away from, and beyond, the one rushing in and stands at right angles to the fifth one. In this way, dressed or not, they get off to meet the suspected enemy.

In the first figure complex the togetherness of the group was opened up by one figure's rising to point to danger. In the second, the peaceful coexistence of the figures suddenly became animated by the abrupt appearance of a vision of danger and the abrupt recognition of actual downfall, both of which also rendered the group more compact. And now, following the surprise inclusion of one man's perishing, the group in the third figure complex starts off for battle. Note how each of the echoing pairs is differently related to the central figure, with the upper pair detaching itself from the third figure and the group of three by being directed towards the suspected enemy. Thus, another aspect of the subject is depicted: how the community of soldiers - self-sufficient in its interrelations and centred firmly in its members' preparations - now breaks up and departs for battle.

With the disruption of the constellation and the increased compactness of the group in the central complex and with the breaking up of the group in the right-hand one in mind, one recognises that the group, too, is a representational category, by means of whose unexpected completion and unexpected transformation abrupt changes and psychological states are made visible.

The two upper figures of the third complex approach the row of figures stretching from left to right above and behind the complexes. This row progresses from the single figure pulling on his shirt, via the two who, leaning to the left and right, button up their hose and practice with their lance respectively, to the three who, in adaptation and variation of the position of Donati's arms, of his shout, terror and protection, rally their comrades with flutes and hurry towards the enemy with their shields raised in defence. The inclinations and intervals of the figures in this row give expression to a gathering momentum. The figures in front come close to the upper two from the last figure complex who, in as much as they detach themselves from their own group, are about to become the leaders of the row and to break up their own group in the general de-

parture. In this way pointing to danger, a vision and recognition of downfall, and actual perishing are followed by departure for the battle of Cascina.

THE GREAT FLOOD BY MICHELANGELO[8]

The eighth of Michelangelo's history paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, *The Great Flood*, dates from 1508 and measures 2,80 x 5,70 m[9] (fig. 2). As Carl Justi, probably the best interpreter of Michelangelo, said, it is "one of the major paintings of the world because of the inexhaustibility of its invention, because of its apparently accidental composition and", he continues, "not least because of its truthfulness, the desire to take the matter seriously, which is the basis of the ability to convince"[10].

The composition contains a number of *caesuras* separating larger units from one another.

The most important of these separates three scenes: the procession of those climbing the hill at the front left, the father carrying his drowned son to the remaining island on the right and the boat and ark with the people in, on or near them at the centre and rear.

Further *caesuras* divide up these three sections into a total of six fully separate compositional units, each of which I shall discuss in turn. They are: -

I) the complex of those on the hill, front left;

II) the row of those climbing this hill, including the man swimming away from them;

III) the boat and those swimming towards it, reaching it and standing in it;

---

[8] Translated from Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus. Beiträge zur Neubegründung einer Historischen Kompositionslehre* (Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, ed. Bandmann, Hubala, Schöne vol. 15). Berlin 1980, pp. 141sqq.

[9] Michelangelo, *The Great Flood*, 1508, Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Rome, Vatican Palace, 280 x 570 cm.

[10] Carl Justi, *Michelangelo. Beiträge zur Erklärung der Werke und des Menschen*, Leipzig 1900, 53.

IV) the ark and those climbing onto it and standing on it, as well as Noah himself;

V) the group of father and drowned son;

VI) the collection of people on and around the piece of remaining land on the right.

Each of the six sections is incomparable in form, figures, motifs and theme. The subject of the composition as a whole is the Great Flood. The general theme of the painting in the context of the overall theme of the ceiling is, as I attempted to demonstrate in my book Michelangelo: The Sistine Ceiling, injustice and the perishing of those not belonging to Noah's family[11].

I. The complex on the left

A woman (fig. 4) reclines on the ground, her legs raised to the right over a rooty tree stump. With her torso turned to the front in full view, she has bound a cloth around her body underneath her breasts. The left arm is pressed close to her body and, with the full width of the hand on the cloth, she feels her body, raising her thumb to her right breast in order to lift it. Her right elbow and forearm rest on a rock, the hand dangling loosely and not clasping anything. With her head inclined towards her right shoulder, she smiles in the direction of her right breast. A child stands behind her to the left, separated from her by a cushion repeating the form of her shoulder and upper arm. Wrapped in a cloak and with a bandage round his head, he is crying, pitifully wiping his eye with the edge of the bandage.

The female figure does not unfold openly and freely, does not rise and flourish. Instead, she is angular and firmly set, both closed off and closing herself off. Thematically, this mother paying no attention to her child depicts egoistically complacent self-love. With this group and this subject matter Michelangelo starts both the first figure complex and the entire composition on the downfall of the unjust in the flood.

Another group follows to the left. Here, an ass appears as a narrow vertical strip, with its head turned in profile towards the centre. To its right stands a bare-footed woman, her cloak held loosely above the hips by an improvised

[11] Rudolf Kuhn, *Michelangelo. Die sixtinische Decke. Beiträge über ihre Quellen und zu ihrer Auslegung*, (Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, ed. Bandmann, Hubala, Schöne Bd. 10). Berlin 1975, 36sqq. et passim.

belt. The narrow verticals of the ass and the woman are capped by the former's head and the latter's shoulder. Above these, the woman lifts her child up to its aged father, on whose shoulder it sits safely, turned to one side. It is sheltered by its father's head scarf and holds on to its mother by placing its arms and hands on, and over the top of, her head. The narrow verticals of the ass and the woman are thus crowned by the curved connection of clasping and covering, of peaceful coexistence, full and animated. The old woman lifts her eyes, seeking the old man's, and her mouth is open in a cry as she delivers her child into safety. The old man's gaze is cheerless, does not answer hers.

The second variation on the general theme thus anticipates a Flight into Egypt, yet with an important difference: the woman remains behind and there is neither confidence nor direction.

A third group corresponds symmetrically to the second. A naked woman, stooping with lowered head, approaches heavily with firm, widely spaced legs. A child presses up against her, holding itself fast by clutching around her thigh. It raises its leg away from the cliff up to her calf and, leaning its head on its shoulder, looks back down the hill. The mother pays no attention to her child, takes no notice of the fact that, although safe from the cliff, the child will fall down at her next step. She embraces a second child lying in her arms and presses its legs to her bosom. Turned outwards, this child plays with its mother's thumb. She gazes beyond its game, looking out to the left with a wordless expression of bitterness. Her cloak is blown out like a sail above her head and around her shoulder, wafts around her back and follows the direction of her thigh, before subsiding to the right. The third variation on the theme is thus a woman with two children, but does not represent caritas.

Below, self-love not heeding children; on the left, cheerless love of children bound to, and binding, the family; on the right, both heedless and stubbornly embracing love of children - these are the thematic components of the figure complex around its central group. The central group itself depicts love between man and woman. The woman is seen in three-quarter view from the rear. With legs open and her right foot poised on its toes, she sits on a cloth a little above ground level. She puts her left arm around her husband's thigh and cloak, while raising and extending her right arm to draw him down towards her. The man stands enclosed in her arms. Inclined towards her, he puts his arm around her head and shoulder, while raising his head to hear what his friend is saying.

In this way conjugal love is placed between love of children and above self-love. Self-love also appears at the top, in the fifth group, consisting of the youth and the tree. The youth's knee is set firmly next to the husband's head and, with the upper leg moving off at an angle, forms a sharp contrast to the gentle arc of the husband's cloak. The tree rises straight up, branches to the right and, reaching out over the floodwaters, rises above, and in front of, the ark and the dove in the distance. The youth presses his left leg against the tree trunk and rests his other leg on it. With his stomach laid on the tree, his armpit resting on the stump of a branch and his right arm clasped round the branch, he reaches forward with his left arm and looks down at the man. He is tempting the latter, for he is climbing the shaking branches of the tree before the man's eyes in order to save himself, and only himself.

These five groups together represent the exposition of the theme of the Great Flood. It is the theme of doomed self-love, pleased with itself or saving itself, of doomed conjugal love, drawing together or separating, and of doomed love of children, binding or embracing. In its ineffectiveness, its distress and cheerless lamentation, its stubbornness and vanity, this love is far removed from the caring, adoring love, which surrounded Adam (fig. 3) and Eve at their creation, and is also far removed from the attitude of Noah and his family at their sacrifice. This other love is depicted in the fourth, fifth and seventh paintings on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

The five groups are set within a firm framing rectangle, filled from the centre outwards. The only way out of this rigidly immobile configuration of human beings loving themselves, their partners or their children is upwards - the way taken by the youth as he climbs the tree. The firmly anchored configuration of groups is thus opened up by the tree which, although projecting towards the ark and dove of salvation, reaches out no further than above the floodwaters.

II The descending row at left centre

As the tree rises up over the flood, so the earth falls away below, giving more and more room to the waters. The family of a second, different Noah, with three sons, their wives and children, servants and household goods, ascends the slope in a long row. Led by the eldest son, accompanied by the father and closed at the rear by the mother, the procession is of a large family seeking to save itself by its own power. The second theme of the composition is thus flight.

Just as the left-hand complex is concerned mainly with women and is introduced by one so the row is concerned mainly with men and is introduced by one, the women being added above and behind them.

The individual motifs are as follows.

With firm thighs, the oldest of the young men climbs the slope, stooping slightly and turning to the front. By thrusting back his arms and clasping under his wife's thighs he holds her fast in a sitting position. Sitting thus on his back, she leans on his shoulders and embraces his head and neck tightly with both arms. With hardly room to breathe he gazes silently and steadfastly in the direction the procession is to take. She looks back over her shoulder and, with 'flaming' hair, terrified gaze and fearfully opened mouth, sees near her a young man being carried, like herself, but dead.

To the right of, below and beyond these two figures the father appears as an undignified half-face between the thighs, chests and arms of his children. Earnest and silent, he sees behind him, to the left, another father, he who is carrying away his dead son.

Further to the right and, once again, to the fore the second son climbs up the slope. Not as far up as the first, he leans forward slightly and raises his left thigh to take a step forwards. His head is lowered to his chest, his face in profile. High above his head and shoulders he holds a large bundle firmly to the back of his neck.

The youngest son follows further to the right, still lower down the slope and still less free. He steps upwards in almost front view, raising his head nearly into profile. His hair blows back in the wind, his mouth is open and his eyes lifted higher up. Their questioning gaze asks what it is that the wife of the eldest son is looking at in such fearful terror. He carries a lighter bundle under his arm and the long shaft of a pan in his hand. The three sons climb with alternately their right, left and right leg to the fore and turn their bodies alternately to the front, to the side and to the front again. They thus climb into view in one walking sequence, from which their accompanying father stands apart.

There follows the second half of the row of visible figures, started by a woman placed closer to her predecessors and less extensively visible. Her dress hangs over her left shoulder and her upper garment slips down her arm as she leads her child by the hand. With her right arm she holds the leg of a table, which she balances upside down on her turbaned head. A pitcher, bread and various implements lie between the table legs. The profile and forehead of a male and a female servant are visible on either side of her head, while the bald

head and lowered face of a further member of the procession are seen above the left corner of the table.

The third young woman follows close behind the child. Close behind her, the wife of the pseudo-Noah brings up the rear, her cloak drawn around her shoulders, the hood over her head, and blowing into her hollow fist. The farthest down the hill, she is nearest to the flood, is projected against it. The final figure of the row appears above her. This young man is still in the water. Seeing the congestion on the hill, he turns to swim away from it.

Just as at the head of the procession the eldest son's wife looks back beyond it to the right and sees a dead person, so at the rear of the procession the swimmer looks up beyond it to the left and sees the congestion on the hill and the uselessness of the climb. And just as the first group of the eldest son and his wife is a variation on the final group of the previous complex, so the first figure of the next group in and around the boat is a variation on the last figure of the row, the one swimming away.

I turn to the structure of the row, its solidity and looseness. There are two horizontal axes binding the figures together. The first is the main axis of the ascending procession. On this lie the eyes of the raised heads of the eldest and youngest sons, of the second and third women and of the old woman at the rear. The second, subsidiary axis intersects with the first. It begins with the pseudo-Noah who, shifted from the main line of figures, breaks up the solidity of the row for the first time. On this axis lie the eyes of the pseudo-Noah, the bald man and the young man swimming away. Thus, two directional axes proceed from the figure heading the row and from the one placed in it to one side, diverging towards the end of the row.

The row is introduced by a group of two - the eldest son and his wife - which is closed in form and ends with two figures - the wife of the pseudo-Noah and the swimmer - which are placed apart from each other.

The separation of the figures, the divergence of the directional axes, the perspective diminution of the figures and the painter loosening up towards the end of the row stand in contrast to the firm groupings, solid plasticity and large-scale figuration of the figures as they climb into view and into safety. In this way is represented the desintegration and downfall of the rear section of this closed procession of figures seeking refuge.

Two of the sequence of six groups and figures at the front of the row provide vertical axes with which the two halves of the row begin: the group of the eldest son and his wife, followed by two further men, and the figure of the

woman carrying the table, closely followed by two further women. The former group heads the row, while the latter figure breaks it up by means of the angular turn of the table above the circular pan. The final figure, seeing that the hill is packed full and that the safety of fleeing up the hill is therefore illusory, turns away. He is the first figure actually in the water. In order not to be overtaken by the flood he swims in it; in order to be sure of survival he is the first in the flood.

The old woman following the procession and the young man swimming away from it end the retreat from the rising waters. They are the culmination of the row's downward progression and of the successive diminution of its figures. At this point the group of father and son suddenly rises up. Carrying his son onto dry land, the father is rescuing the only dead person in the entire picture.

In this history painting, too, a story is told, an idea developed. Firstly, doomed self-love, love of children and conjugal love are presented in the firm constellation of five groups, suddenly broken up by the figure up the tree. Then flight is depicted, the retreat from the water and its sudden reversal in the figure swimming away. And then, out of this reversal, this swimming away, there arises the fundamental surprise of the drowned man being carried onto land. Yet let us return to take a look at what is narrated in between these last two actions, to see why the swimmer detaches himself from the procession and swims past the father and his dead son as if to certain safety.

III and IV The groups in and around the boat in the middle ground and the ark in the background

Surrounded on all sides by the flood-waters, the oval tub of a boat drifts to the left, thanks to two men pushing on the left and a third who, leaning against the wall of the boat at the right, looks to the front and grasps behind him like a steersman. The curved walls at the free ends of the boat bind together powerfully the figures thrusting towards, and away from, each other within its confines.

The ark floats on the water near the top, rising above the horizon. Seen at an angle and with its narrow side turned towards the beholder, it is shifted out of parallel to the strip of land in the foreground. The flat, closed surface of the lower storey is surmounted by a protruding upper storey organised in the manner of an entablature, with triglyphs, *guttae* and metopes. The hipped roof sup-

ports a *belvedere*. Like the wife of the pseudo-Noah and the swimmer in the row of refuge-seekers, the ark and the land in the foreground diverge towards the right at an angle. It is the divergence of safety and downfall.

In the angle between the land sloping off and the ark rising up, between them and the island of rock on the right and in front of the wide expanse of floodwater lies the boat. It appears to drift aimlessly and unguided from the sinking land to the ascending ark.

In the first two sections of the composition hopelessly bound and condemned love, as well as flight upwards and away from the flood waters, were depicted in solid figures held together closely. At the loss of this solidity we now see a fight in the boat as well as safety and downfall on the ark depicted as the thrusts of individual limbs and configurations of limbs towards, in opposition to, and away from each other. Let us examine this in detail.

The fight for the boat

With his shoulders, head and right arm raised out of the water, a man swims with gentle, broad strokes towards the boat, on which he fixes his gaze. In front of him to the left, a second man has already reached the boat and hangs on it by resting his arms over its edge. Both men are naked, seen from the shoulders up and have close-cropped hair. They belong together as the first of those pairs of male figures so important in this section of the picture. Seeing one man arrive and another approaching, a woman in the boat recoils, raising her left arm above her head in defiance. She shouts at the approaching man to go away, the edge of the boat being only just above water level. The upward thrust of her body to the left is countered by the front-on figure to her left, who twists to the right. With hands and arms resting on the edge of the boat, this rudderless steersman leans against the wall of the boat, glancing over his shoulder to see what is happening up front.

Together, these pairs of figures in the water and in the boat form the first group in and around the boat. The group places aimless leaning and terrified defiance in front of swimming towards the safety of a boat and arriving at the boat, at the same time confronting the woman helpless with terror and the rudderless steersman with other figures arriving and approaching. The situation anticipates that of the following group, the fight itself. The first group thus consists of four figures. The second group - that of the fight to keep one man out of the boat - contains three figures, the third and final group two.

In the second group, to the left of the first, a man has clambered over the edge of the boat. In this 'riding' position he is attacked from behind by a man

who places his right leg against his side and with his left leg prevents him from completely entering the boat. Holding him by the hair, he thrusts his head downwards and outwards, towards the water, and raises his right fist to strike him. This is the second pair of male figures. Just as the first two were seen from behind, so these two are seen equally from the side. The companion of the second man leaps forward, places her right foot between the first man's shoulder blades and, raising a club up behind her head and neck, holds it over him ready to strike. With their leaping and striking, the fighters increase the risk of capsizing by being likely to fall heavily against the wall of the boat.

The two men of the final group on the left are seen from behind at an angle. Close together, they plant themselves at the edge of the boat, bending forwards in order to press its far side against the water to prevent water flowing into the boat on the near side and capsizing it. These figures, too, are naked, as indeed all are, except for the defiant woman shouting for help. Once again, the group consists of two men, one with abundant hair.

In this sequence of groups the first pair of men is seen from behind, the second from the side and the third from behind again. The figures are successively more complete: the first pair is seen from the shoulders upwards, the second from the thigh upwards and the third in full. The first pair recedes in an arc, leading on to the second pair to the left, which guides the eye backwards again to the third pair behind. From here, the figures on the ark are visible in the distance. Three aspects are represented in turn by the three groups belonging to the boat: the first consists of endangering approach, arrival, defiant terror and aimless leaning, the second of dangerous fighting in the middle and the third of powerful prevention of the boat capsizing at that moment. The situation as a whole is undecided. Yet there is danger that the man swimming up to the boat to save himself may precipitate the downfall of all.

The ark

On the ark itself are represented apparent safety, downfall and real safety.

In front of the two men pressing the boat down against the water to prevent it capsizing are two similar figures, who have fled onwards to the ark. These two men who have reached the ark belong to different groups.

The left-hand group

The man arrived at the ark through the flood supports himself wearily on its base with his left arm. He extends his right arm to hold onto the figure helping him and pulls his right leg and foot up onto the base of the ark. A wom-

an (?) has approached from the left, kindly bending down to assist him to the dryness of the ark. By the addition of another woman these two figures are made to form a group. The second woman is clothed and, turned to the left, is weeping.

The central group

The other man who has arrived at the ark through the flood holds himself upright in the water by resting his arms on its base. Above him, another man stands in the wind with both arms lifted high in order to take hold of a ladder. Enterprisingly animated, he stands with his back to the weeping woman and facing a third figure on his right. This latter stands firmly on both legs and, having grasped the ladder, now looks to the left in front of his neighbour to see where to place it. The group is completed on the right by a man who, gazing up at the top of the ladder, looks where to place it and, seizing a lower rung with both hands, prepares to help lift it. The ladder itself lies in the path of the cry for help uttered by the woman in the boat. Set against the roof of the ark, it is directed towards the dove promising security. It will assist in reaching both roof and dove, in attaining real safety.

The right-hand group

A man bends down to draw a woman onto the ark. The woman has come from the right. Resting her torso exhaustedly on the base of the ark, she stretches out her right arm as far as possible and holds on to the far edge. She props herself up laboriously with her left arm and strains forward with her head.

The first to arrive had come for help, which was granted him, and met with sorrow and tears, which approached him. The second to arrive found comradely help to further safety in the middle. The third to arrive closes the whole symmetrically by being received by someone bending to assist her. Rising to the centre and falling away again, the whole configuration is almost as solid as the figures and groups of a pediment frieze: a group of three is followed by one of four in the middle and now by this one of three on the right. But suddenly the silhouette of the third and final figure of this last group appears threateningly around the corner. With powerful impetus he has seized an axe with both hands and, swinging it up behind his head, prepares to strike the helper and to despatch both persons in front of him with a single blow. This man brings the third group unexpectedly and abruptly to a close and thus the whole symmetrically restful sequence of groups. He therefore brings to a close saving, helping, mourning; further saving; helping and saving - and he does so with downfall

beyond that indicated by the fight in the boat, namely with destruction visited upon people helping one another.

The sudden termination of each section of the composition starts to become regular. The solid arrangement of groups in the first section was opened up by the tree growing upwards and outwards. The solid row of the second section was opened up by the man who turned and swam away. And the boat about to sink as a result of the arrival of the swimmers and of the fight between those in it was with difficulty kept afloat. Yet Michelangelo was not satisfied with opening up the series of groups rising and falling in the shape of a pediment by placing the man raised to his full height and wielding an axe at their conclusion. It was not enough for him to let saving and helping end in murder and perishing in the flood. Instead, one suddenly sees Noah, surprisingly placed up above the man wielding the axe. Stretching his head far out of the ark and lifting his left arm far out and up (like the tree's branches), this *iustus atque perfectus vir* (Gen. 6:9) is the only one of all those on earth, the *corrupta et iniquitate repleta* (Gen. 6:11), who turns upwards to Yahweh (if this figure has been destroyed) or towards His heaven. After all the saving and helping, which end in homicide, he is thus the one truly saved. This most distant and highest figure is placed on the central axis of the picture. He is the climax of the entire composition.

Just as at the right-hand end of the row of those escaping up the slope the old woman blowing into her hollow fist was separated from the swimmer turning away to apparent safety, so at the right-hand corner of the ark downfall below is separated from salvation above.

The figures on the ark and in the boat are dominated by their limbs, strive and move towards, against and away from each other. They, and the safety, downfall and fighting they depict, are differentiated in size and in rhythmic and dynamic character. The figures in the groups on the ark, set against its wall, act continuously from left to right: they lift themselves to safety, help each other and perish in upward and downward thrusts. This causes the murderer's appearance and Noah's turn upwards to seem sudden. The figures in and around the boat, on the other hand, possess an arena in its oval tub. They approach, flee, fight and balance to the right and left, above and below, backwards and forwards. They rush together and scatter apart.

There is a sequence of action, interrupted by *caesuras*, running through the series of groups in and around the boat and ark. It had begun earlier, at the end of those fleeing up the slope. The restful and solid arrangement of those having arrived with the pseudo-caritas at the top of the slope was followed, after

a *caesura*, by the procession of pseudo-Noah, travelling peacefully, collected and solid, up the hill and led by the eldest son carrying his wife on his back. The last member of the procession, seeing the slope overcrowded, turned away to swim through the floodwaters. He stands at the head of the single sequence of action comprising figures acting by turns with gentle and quick movement and with passionate force. A gap after the man ceasing to seek safety on the slope is followed by another swimmer who, having long since left behind those on or near the slope, swims on broadly towards the boat. The next figure actually arrives at the boat. A further two are engaged in a fight. Another two, with the safety of the ark before them, balance the boat just before it sinks. After a further gap, two figures are seen reaching the safety of the ark where help, mourning, renewed preparations and help again quickly lead on to downfall. Above the downfall there appears Noah.

The S-shaped sequence of action, divided up by two *caesuras*, is thus one continuous action, from the overcrowded land to the boat and from the boat to the ark moving away from the land. This continuous action ends in murder and downfall. Above the downfall there appears Noah.

What remains? The action of the Great Flood is complete.

V The group of father and son
The fundamental surprise

Following on the figure complex and the row on the left and preceding the group sequences in the boat and on the ark, all of which consist of several groups, there occurs the only group of two in the entire composition. Emotionally emphasised by means of *caesuras*, it is also the only group with an abrupt upward thrust. Situated after the solidly arranged figure complex on the hill and after the row gradually sinking away towards the water and opened up by the old woman and the swimmer, the hovering in the water, the fighting, action, repeated helping, action and threatening murder close by the water - situated after all this, the group is neither still in the floodwaters, neither has it perished. It is extremely erect, unprepared for and unconnected, suddenly arising almost out of thin air.

A corpse, the only dead person in the picture, is being carried forwards. In the composition of the Battle of Cascina actual downfall appeared suddenly as the fundamental surprise. Similarly, here there suddenly appears what the

flood actually signifies for all the people, irrespective of flight and aid, fighting, murder and activity - namely, death and drowning.

A father steps slowly and firmly towards the last remaining hill, laboriously carrying his son in his arms. His head inclines to his shoulder as though broken by grief. His drowned son is turned front-on towards the beholder. The father carries him with his dangling legs and dangling left arm in front him, his right arm hanging over his shoulder and his head - fallen to one side with mouth open and eyes closed - above him. It is pointless for the living person, the father, to have raised the dead one, his son, above him and pointless for him to carry him towards a piece of land already fully occupied.

This group is the hub of the composition. The flight to the left, up the slope, moves away from it; likewise the flight backwards to the boat and arc, passing by it in order to escape drowning and downfall. And now the dead person is being carried to the last of the living, who have him in front of them.

VI The complex on and near the island, under and next to the tent

How does the complex closing the whole composition differ from the one introducing it on the left? Although compressed and without gaps, its entirety is diffuse, including several fragmentary figures. The youth reclining in front and the back, head and arm of a second one above him hardly bestow order on it.

The first single figure is a youth (fig. 5) who reclines with his calves towards the right and his thighs towards the left. His torso turns upwards to the right, the right upper arm further down to the right and then the forearm straight upwards. His head lies erect in the bent of his arm. The youth reclines on his side, with feet and knees placed together and above each other and with both thighs and buttocks turned towards the beholder. More lasciviously than casually, he rests his soft torso and his arm broadly on a wine cask. He meditates in hopeless sorrow.

The final figure complex commences with reclining of this kind. How different from that introducing the first complex! On the one hand, the self-satisfied woman (fig. 4), strong and firm, preoccupied with the flowering strength of her own body and severe to her child; on the other hand, the weakened youth, gazing in hopeless sorrow and alone amid the throng. Behind the youth, to the left, are two variations on a single figure type. A woman sitting in

the shadow of her father's shoulder stretches out her arms in lamentation to her son, to embrace him. Crouching, the old man silently and earnestly extends his arm and hand to receive his son and nephew. Behind him, to the right and left, are figures remaining in the shadow of the tent and watching the mother and the old man. Hopeless, inactive and sympathetic gazing, seeing and recognising, have taken the place of all the fleeing, helping, fighting, killing and acting. (The left part of the tent belongs to a lost portion of the fresco; the remains of the figures are no longer decipherable either.)

The partly hidden figure of another youth appears above the one reclining in the middle. With only back, head and right arm visible, his precise position in the crowd is unclear. He looks hopelessly out in front of him, with his arm hanging down, his half-closed hand dangling and his gaze lowered. He is overcome by inert lethargy.

Condemned, inseparably bound love was the theme of the composition's first section, its exposition. It was followed by urgent flight in the second and by the fight for safety, by administered downfall and real safety in the third and fourth sections. There then occured the sudden deepening of the theme by the death of the drowned youth in the fifth section. The sixth and final section now depicts inactive and unhasty mental reactions, reflection in the face of death and the flood. This mental confrontation of downfall begins with the axial figure of the partially hidden youth.

The solidly arranged first section was followed by the second, descending one and by the third and fourth ones, ascending in S-curves from the figure swimming away and culminating in Noah. After the standing group of two and after the axial figure of the final complex the composition closes in two areas arranged symmetrically above one another.

In the lower area a youth sits tired and exhausted on the edge of the rock, which continues at an angle the line of the previous youth's lethargically dangling arm. He sits half on the rock and half on his girl's arm, rests his left arm on her neck, in a manner comparable to the drowned son in the group of two, and lets his hand fall. Sitting lower down, the girl assists him and supports him on her arm, nestles close to him and, with him, watches the waters rising. Woman helps man: togetherness. A nude and a clothed figure: he watches, physically exhausted, she smiles quietly in her soul. The gentlest pathos.

Above this pair are four figures in the shadow of the tent. Weeping and complaining, bitter and lamenting as they watch, they all appear safe in the tent.

The Position of the Figures above and below the Horizon

The complacent woman on the left was placed against the earth and to that extent was safe. The mother in the pseudo Flight into Egypt was set against the water, passing her child up to the safety of the old man above the horizon, removing it from the region of the water. The pseudo caritas arrived seen against the water, yet bitter and wrapped up so as not to see it. The wife was set against her husband and was safe to that degree. The husband himself was placed against the water and looked up at the youth who, to save himself, was climbing up above the horizon in the tree. The tree itself reached high up above the horizon, seemingly growing towards the ark, but in reality out over the flood.

In the procession climbing the slope the first man was seen against his wife and was fully occupied with carrying her. She was set against the water; turning her gaze away from it, she still saw the drowned youth. The other figures in the procession presented a closed mass placed against the water, which appeared now and again above hands or above and between heads - until the final figure, who turned away and swam in it.

The boat also offered safety: those seen against it stood firmly, but always at the mercy of the water.

The ark granted real safety. Rising up powerfully and scarcely in the water, inasmuch as it rode on and above the flood it offered security to those set off against it. But suddenly, danger threatened this refuge too, in the form of the man wielding the axe. The only person really high above the flood was Noah.

The father with his dead son is seen surrounded on all sides by water. Then, once again, safety is offered - by the tent on the island. From the shelter of this tent there issue tears, complaints, bitter and lamenting gazes. And lastly, the tent, pitched around a tree trunk, and the edge of the rock give on to the final figures.

Below, a youth arrives at the island and, looking up at the pair of lovers, seizes almost demandingly the root deceptively proffered him by a hand. The nearer of the two figures above him crouches with both hands on the rock, pushing his head forward to observe the floodwaters rising below. The other figure lifts his hand - in a manner different from Noah - and watches. He is terrified, the other astonished. Above, below and in front of them is water.

2. Composition in Raphael's Designing Procedure[1]

We have seen in the former lecture to what extent a composition could be comprehended, and how it contributes to the representation of the subject matter. Indeed, it is an intricate construction. It demands a thoughtful labour and is usually done step by step. Occasionally, visual evidence of this intense process has survived. A good example are, perhaps, the drawings of Raphael. For this reason, I would like to speak in this lecture on Raphael, and especially on Raphael's artistic intelligence, his judgement and his powers of discrimination, of that '*grande discrezzione (d'ingegno)*' reckoned by Leonardo da Vinci[2] to be a prerequisite of adequate artistry. I should like to do so by attempting to render his designing procedure intelligible as *method*. I shall proceed in three stages. First, I shall discuss the problem of forming groups or figures - technically speaking, the *figurazione* - using a drawing for the *Bridgewater Madonna*. Then I shall examine in detail the working out of the arrangement of a large-scale *storia* - technically speaking, the *disposizione* - using drawings for the *Disputa*. Finally, I shall describe briefly the elaboration of the entirety of such a many-figured *storia* -

---

[1] Translated from the German by Michael Foster. For the German version, see: Rudolf Kuhn, "Raffaels Entwurfspraxis und die sprunghafte Entwicklung seines Kompositionsvermögens 1508." *Intuition und Darstellung. Erich Hubala zum 24. März 1985*, ed. Frank Büttner, Christian Lenz. München 1985, pp. 51-68.

[2] Leonardo's terms in this chapter are cited from his *Libro della Pittura*. For the Italian version which is also accompanied by a German translation and annotations, see: Lionardo da Vinci, *Das Buch von der Malerei*, ed. by Heinrich Ludwig, vols. 1-3. Vienna 1882 (Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte etc. ed. by Rudolf Eitelberger v. Edelberg), Reprint Osnabrück 1970. The first terms appears in § 403, and the later ones (*conpartizione*) in §§ 179, 483, (*componimento inculto* ecc.) in § 76, in connection with §§ 64, 189, and (categories) in § 511. Cf. Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting*, translated by A. Philip McMahon, 2 vols, Princeton 1956, vol. 1, §§ 430; 249; 256 in connection with §§ 257, 261; 427.

technically speaking, the *composizione* - using drawings for *The School of Athens*.

1

I begin with the *figurazione*, in this case the group composition, of the *Tempi Madonna* in Munich[3] (fig. 6). Anyone who has taken a look at this work will have felt the emotional life of the two related persons.

Three things to notice about the figure composition:

Firstly, the Madonna and the child are characterised antithetically. Raphael demonstrates the solidity of the child's body in its head, shoulders, back and buttocks. With the Madonna a gentle and floating, an oscillating and mobile character is indicated in the cloak and veil passing over the head, the veil and sleeve passing over shoulder and arm and, further, in the cloak falling from the shoulder, down the back of the figure and up across the hip. To become fully conscious of this one might try to recreate the form of the cloak over the Madonnas head in the mind's eye, using fingers and hands to follow its protrusions and recessions, its merging into a bulge at the neck and its disappearance above, and reappearance below, the shoulder. One might now try to follow the hem of the cloak, its pulls, curves and turns - that hem which forms the left-hand contour of both figure and group. One may then experience the contrast with the contour of figure and group on the right. Here, a series of strong, clear, convex arcs follow on each other vertically, enclosing the shoulder and back of the child and the Madonnas fingers pressed to the shape of its body. The Madonnas cloak is here horizontal, standing away at right angles from the child's body. In this way opposing characterisations are integrated into a unified group.

My second point is that, although any beholder may immediately experience the emotional life of both persons as mood, it ought not to be overlooked that the emotional aspect of both persons is expressed throughout in action - in articulated, differentiated action. Notice how the Madonna moves her forearm

[3] Raphael, *Madonna Tempi*, ca. 1507, Munich, Alte Pinakothek, 75 x 51 cm.

(which in contrast to the upper arm is closer in form and colour to naked flesh) up to the child, bends her hand at the wrist, supports the child's back, feels its shoulder with her thumb and holds its side with her fingers, and how she draws the child to her and holds it with her hand. Notice, further, how the child - lifted to, and held at, her breast - supports itself on its raised arm in order to look out and how its mother inclines her head in order to feel the child with her cheek, the side of her nose and her lip. Support, touching and holding, feeling, independence and attachment, tenderness - all is here action and movement, is realised in articulated and differentiated movement and action. This is just as called for by Leonardo, who declared this '*dimostrazione*' of '*accidenti mentali*' in '*attitudini et moti*' - i.e. the representation of the mind and soul of figures in their poses and movements - to be the '*parte più nobile*' of figure composition and precisely that which requires that '*grande discrezzione d'ingegno*' I mentioned at the beginning.

Finally, let us take another look at the right-hand contour, the section with the shoulder and back of the child and the fingers of its mother. How clearly the arcs are drawn, with what measured rhythm they follow on each other: three large ones, along the shoulder and back of the child, four half as long, describing the Madonnas fingers. It should be noted that this series of arcs forms a measured rhythmical unit and that this unit unites materially different things - the child's shoulder and back, the mother's fingers - or, metaphorically speaking, makes them rhyme.

I now show you two sheets of drawings, both from the so-called large Florentine sketchbook: on the left RZ[4] 110 in the Albertina, on the right RZ 109 in the British Museum (fig. 8). Each leaf measures roughly 26 x 19 cm. Red chalk is used in the upper part of the left-hand leaf; otherwise, nearly all the drawing is in pen and brown ink. Both sheets belong to those almost overloaded by Raphael with motifs for groups of the Madonna and Child and provide evidence of his great facility in the invention of motifs.

I shall concentrate on the main drawing of the right-hand sheet. This group, too, consists of antithetical figures: above all, it is the Madonna who is calm and the child who is animated. The *Tempi Madonna* belongs to Raphael's

[4] Numbers prefixed with RZ refer to *Raphaels Zeichnungen*, ed. by Oskar Fischel and Konrad Oberhuber, Berlin 1913 sqq.

type of Madonna with calm, upright child, this one to the third type in his development: the Madonna with animated child. In this group, too, the emotional aspect of the personages is presented as action, in their poses, inclinations, movements and turns independent of, and in relation to, each other. Thus the child moves its legs, body and head strongly: it is a being with strength of its own. As though running from her lap, it frees itself (at the centre of its body) from its mother, yet, resting its right arm on her enclosing one, reaching for her hand with its own left one and turning its gaze to meet hers, lives out its animation for its mother. This independent detachment of the child from its mother while remaining in her care *is* its emotional state at that moment and is for us the state of *this particular* child, whose name and subsequent life Raphael and the beholder know. In Him, the Divine One - and this is always the meaning of Raphael's third type of Madonna - strength, movement, turning, looking upwards are brought to perfect animation in human form.

And now to the third aspect, the figuration. Let us look again at the centre of movement, at how the parts of the body diverge in space and how these diverging parts are figured in a unified whole. The child's right thigh projects downwards towards us, the lower leg and foot are lower still. It bends its torso upwards to the left, the chest and head are higher still. The left thigh leads backwards and downwards to the right; the lower leg is further back still. These movements diverging upwards and downwards, to the right and the left, forwards and backwards, these movements of firmly contoured limbs above the protruding leg are bound together by an energetic pen-stroke describing a clear arc from the waist to the back of the knee. This is echoed by another arc below the stomach. This centre of movement is strong in plasticity and concise in divergence and unity, it 'sounds' as a result of the echoing arcs and it glows in front of the hatching on the Madonna. It is thus a paradigm of figuration. In one go - note the spontaneity of the drawing! - Raphael has found a formulation for a highly complex variety of movement which is radiant and concise and which 're-sounds' throughout the group, as is shown by the contour arcs at the right of the Madonnas breast, at her shoulder and on the left side of her face. This is scarcely different from a poet finding a concise, 'sounding' and at the same time concretely descriptive formulation. Both sheets together are instructive since they allow us to distinguish quite clearly between *invenzione* and *figurazione*, between the invention of motifs and figuration. Searching among the other drawings for a comparable concision and radiance, one finds 'sounding' that is hardly concretely descriptive, concrete description that does not yet 'sound' and

many intermediate stages. In this respect the drawing discussed remains incomparable; it later formed the basis of the *Brigdewater Madonna*. The drawings on these two leaves demonstrate that for Raphael an artistic figure was something quite different from an invented motif.

2

After this discussion of *figurazione* I proceed to a detailed examination of *disposizione*, i.e. the working-out of the arrangement for a whole *storia*. For this purpose I shall use Raphael's arrangement studies for the *Disputa*. For the left-hand group of figures in the terrestrial sphere six clearly worked out ones have survived - more than for any other part of the fresco or for any other work of Raphael's.

The *Disputa* (5,90 x 8,20 m) (figs. 9 and 10) on the west wall of the former library of Pope Julius II Rovere in the Vatican Palace (the present *Stanza della Segnatura*) depicts in its lower section not a disputation among mortals concerning the Blessed Sacrament but, as I attempted to demonstrate in my book *Composition and Rhythm*[5], a disputation about the relative merits of, on the one hand, reading theological and biblical writings and, on the other, adoring and contemplating the Host exposed on the altar. Both points of view are lived out actively, realised in groups and single figures, beginning on the left. The first constellation consists of a group of three occupied with a book and placed next to a single figure inviting contemplation of the Host. This is then repeated with reverse content: a group of three striving towards the Host and a single figure pointing to a book. There follows a more widely spaced group of three comprising Pope Gregory, Cardinal Jerome and a Franciscan with an intermediary single figure pointing and exhorting the last of the readers to look at the Host. As the climax and centre of the composition there then follows the Host itself, exposed on the altar and beneath the *deesis* in Heaven. And now as a complete surprise - notice again the spontaneity! - attention is suddenly drawn to Heaven by a terrestrial being. It is important for the arrangement of the *storia*

[5] Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus. Beiträge zur Neubegründung einer Historischen Kompositionslehre* (Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, ed. Bandmann, Hubala, Schöne Bd. 15). Berlin 1980, pp. 3 - 20.

that no-one in the left half of the composition looks up or points to Heaven; and now, to the right of the altar, Bishop Ambrose's sight of Heaven leads, in figures connected by the strong curves and arcs of their arms and by the arm of the throne and the pluviale, to Bishop Augustine's dictation of his books, which are conveyed to earth via the secretary's writing. Thus, the dispute is broken through by the books being shown as inspired by the sight of that very reality of which the Host is a pledge. Equally surprising, there follows the pope (Sixtus IV Rovere) and those who follow him and point to him as a model. They, too, gaze at the Host. The one thing is thus a matter for the Church Fathers, the other for the pope and the faithful following him.

Now the arrangement studies for the left-hand side show that this particular theme first arose in the course of work, after a series of ever-changing arrangements in which figures and groups were ordered according to their connection with, and separation from, each other. I should like to go through these studies with the intention of demonstrating three things:

a) how Raphael developed the arrangement gradually, but by no means regularly - in other words, what he actually achieved in the act of arranging;

b) how and when the particular theme arose; and

c) what preceded this particular theme, what formed - perhaps as more general subject matter - its basis, or to put it more simply: what kept Raphael at work, what the matter meant to him up to that point.

I shall limit myself to the arrangement of figures and groups, ignoring the no less important distribution of light and shade.

The six arrangement studies to be discussed fall into three groups of two. The first pair consists of RZ 258 in Windsor, for both the terrestrial and celestial spheres of the left half, and RZ 260 in Chantilly, the only one for both halves of the terrestrial sphere. (We may disregard its companion for the celestial sphere, RZ 259 in Oxford).

The first study (28 x 28,5) (fig. 11).

One recognises that to start with neither altar nor Host were planned, that the arrangement and the relationship between the celestial and terrestrial beings is represented directly and that a pledge from the former to the latter is not taken into account. Moreover, steps and platforms for organisation and emphasis do not yet exist. In the final version the first single figure, the young man inviting contemplation of the Host, is unusually placed for such a figure. Alt-

hough an 'upbeat' figure in type, it occurs after a preliminary group of three, thus accentuating its difference, novelty and objection-like character in relation to the three occupied with their book. In the Windsor study, too, the figure functions as an upbeat, starting the composition at the left, and its form, hovering on a cloud amidst fixed architecture, points from earth up to Heaven. In the final version Raphael decided against putting this reference at the beginning and, as I said, after developing the disputation towards the contemplation and visibility of the monstrance, succeeded in suddenly and unexpectedly breaking through, and transcending, the dispute by introducing the motif of inspiration.

Turning our attention to the main group, we see that the task was to place four seated Church Fathers - two on the left - amid a group of mostly standing men. One of the left-hand Church Fathers looks up, pointing now for a second time to Heaven, the other writes or reads. Looking up and writing/reading are not sharpened thematically into an antithesis but, as one gathers from the actions of the others, are rather variations. The gaze to Heaven, which binds the figure more strongly to the centre, is placed at the edge. Both seated figures are embedded in their context. The first sits before a background of standing men, who not only echo the form of the framing architecture, with its angled recession and perspectival isocephaly, but even repeat it, themselves standing in a continuous line. The second seated figure is embedded in a sequence of stooping figures which sinks towards him, towards his writing or reading, and rises again around his back; these figures are also arranged continuously. After a *caesura*, this continuum of standing and bending figures is stabilised at the right by two further figures standing at the head of the entire row. The inclination of the heads is varied, and standing, stooping, kneeling and sitting are differentiated in character, characters which are nevertheless related to each other and arrived at gradually.

The second study (23,2 x 40,5 cm) (fig. 12).

Both halves of the terrestrial group are put together here. Architecture was probably not planned at the left: the standing figures certainly do not repeat any possible architecture. The heads of the standing and seated figures on the left are now closer together, the spaces between them smaller. Perhaps the figures depicted were as a whole felt to be closer to, raised higher towards, the celestial sphere and would have to have been introduced on the left by an 'upbeat' figure or object placed lower down. Yet the problem of an 'upbeat' is ignored here. The previous solution has at any rate been discarded: since the two figures closing the left-hand group on the right have now been omitted, or integrated

into the right-hand group as Dante and his companion, the former 'upbeat' figure would be unbalanced. But enough of speculation: I shall now compare what we actually see.

The seated figure looking up on the left anticipates the upward gaze in the right half, so that this connection with Heaven no longer surprises. The tendency to form continuous rows noted in the previous study for the left half is now increased. The fourth standing figure now inclines himself to those stooping, thus producing an unbroken continuum of heads arranged in groups of three. This continuum no longer consists of mostly standing figures, but of ones stooping and straightening up. It is so conducted as to form enclosing hollows in which the main figures are set. I have limited myself to the left half; Raphael, of course, contrasted it with the right half.

The next pair of arrangement studies - the first surviving in the Louvre as two partial copies which belong together (RZ 262/263), the second in the British Museum (RZ 267) - show a fundamental break. In place of brush and bistre heightened with white Raphael took up the more sharply delineating medium of pen and ink, the second study making additional use of wash.

In the first (25,6 x 27,2 and 19,2 x 18,5) (fig. 13), Raphael undertook a thorough re-arrangement of the seven figures - now increased to ten by the reintroduction of the two at the head of the row and the one pointing inwards at the left - around the seated main ones: a total of twelve figures.

He *separated* the figures by means of *caesuras* into ones belonging *together* in single figures and groups - '*conpartizione*', as Leonardo's excellent *oxymoron* puts it. 'Connecting separation', i.e. figures which move apart from one another in connections because they share common opposites and differences. What Raphael clarified, arranged, may be couched in a series of questions. Why does a figure stand next to the man looking up or next to the one bent reading? If his place next to the man looking up is the right one, does he stand behind him to reinforce his uprightness or beside him doing the same thing or parallel to him doing something else? If a figure stands between the man looking up and the one reading with his companions, in which direction does he turn, in which direction does he point, in which direction does he look so that what he is pointing to will be seen? And if a figure is next to the man reading, does he, like the reader, look directly into the book or from farther off and does he, like the reader, look attentively or more urgently? As a result of this questioning Raphael recast the individual actions of both the single and the linked figures, recast their *accidenti mentali*. At a stroke the arrangement be-

comes more varied, richer in directional turns (note especially the pointing figure on the far side of the man looking up) and more complex (notice the placing of all the figures between the two final ones on the right and the one pointing inwards from a lower level on the left).

Raphael did something else too: he composed with nudes. This enabled him to ground the poses and movements of figures now turning freely on firm axes in all directions to and from each other - to ground these attitudes in the body movements of living human beings moving and acting both together and in opposition. In order to concentrate on achieving clarity in this he ignored other qualities such as age and rank. Instead of the young, middle-aged and old men depicted in the previous study, he composed uniformly with young men capable of an equal degree of movement - with just one or two models, such as could easily be found in any workshop. With regard to the final version it should be noted that in this study Raphael already repeats a figure at intervals and in varied form. In the penultimate standing figure he varies the one standing on the other side and pointing to the book of the man looking up; both are variations on the 'upbeat' figure pointing inwards from a lower level.

With regard to the next arrangement study there is, however, one qualification to be made. Although Raphael arranged the figures that had formerly simply framed and surrounded the Church Fathers into figures and groups which have a life rich in differences and oppositions between, behind and in front of the Church Fathers, he did not rethink the position, prominence or activity of the Fathers themselves. Is there a reason for the spatial and figural separation of their looking upwards and reading? Is there a reason for representing parallel activity behind the one, but conversation in front of the other? Why does one man kneel behind the reader, but three stand behind the Church Father looking upwards? Is it appropriate for three to point, and to point in the same way? And towards whom does the pointing figure standing at the edge turn? Concerned with separating and connecting the figures, with the complexity and variety of their movements and actions, Raphael concentrated to such an extent on the differentiated characterisation of the figures and groups that, on completion of the study, ha was no longer satisfied with it as a whole. Its unity, proportions and divisions, balance and clarity were insufficient for him and it may be supposed that the first and last figures, linked only superficially through variation and number, appeared to him more appended than integrated.

In the next arrangement study (14,3 x 40 cm) (fig. 14) Raphael completely transformed the arrangement on the basis of the newfound principle of

separating persons moving together and in opposition into antithetical figures and groups. Now it does indeed appear varied yet clear, measured yet concentrated.

The details of this re-arrangement are as follows. Raphael replaced the single 'upbeat' figure by a group of four, which is repeated in varied form further back in space. Raphael also shifted the single kneeling figure to the left: formerly separating the Church Fathers thematically, figurally and spatially, it now takes its place behind Pope Gregory in a group of three kneeling figures balancing the three standing ones. Further, Raphael moved the two Church Fathers together: the one looking upwards is now seen from the side, the one reading in three-quarter view as before and both within a gentle arc. Finally, Raphael assigned the closing figures of the previous study to the reading Church Father and, in reverse, to the one looking up, placing them further back and lower down so that only their heads are visible.

Raphael thus increased the number of ground levels: there is now one for the group of four figures, one for the rows of three and one for the two seated on thrones. He also enriched the figure schemes: there are no longer any single figures, only groups, rows and pairs. And in addition he enlarged the number of figures: now twenty altogether, instead of twelve. The composition has a measured effect. The visible length of the altar *mensa*, though not precisely ascertainable, appears to be the same as the distance between the edge of the altar and the point where the volutes of the throne's back and arm meet, which is the same as that from this point to the back of the rearmost kneeling figure and, after a *caesura* providing almost tangible space for their movement forwards, the same as the width of the 'upbeat' group of four figures. Instead of the single figures repeated at intervals in the previous study, here it is the baluster, ornamented throne and decorated corner of the altar that are related to each other - in a proportion of two to one. The number of figures assigned to the groups and rows is also proportional: 4 : 4 : 3 : 3 : (1+2 and 2+1).

Finally, Raphael clarified the composition and concentrated it rigorously. Figures far away from those on the thrones stand here and there in rounded, self-contained groups that are similar to each other. Figures nearer to those on the thrones come together to form differing rows, some rising up, some sinking down, receding or spread laterally, positioned at an angle. Thus they give angular tension to the entire series of figures. There follow the two figures on their thrones. Variants of a single figure type, they now sit together more loosely in a more spacious arc. The perspectival recession also works rigorously towards

concentration. The advancing figures, those kneeling, those on the thrones and even the latter's distant companions are accommodated to the vanishing line, each unit coming forward like stage flats, one behind the other. The recession is strengthened by the sequence of baluster, throne-end and altar corner. The perspectival sequence also contains the germ of a consistently developed *storia*, with a thematic progression from advancing in discussion, via pressing forward to look, to looking upwards and reading.

For the first time, in this, the fourth composition study to be discussed, there now appears the altar with chalice and Host as the goal of the left-hand concentration. Standing freely beside the vanishing line, it seems like a vision. Those following the figures advancing in discussion are pressing forward to look at the Holy Sacrament, Pope Gregory is looking up at the dove further back and St. Jerome is (presumably) reading the Bible.

In place of the rapid alternation of figures turning from and towards each other in the previous study there has emerged an alternation which is spacious as a whole, which is restful in the arrangement of figures no less different from one another and which, thanks to the perspectival concentration, proceeds swiftly. Once again, an arrangement had been arrived at which could have been completed to fill an entire wall. The jump from the first to the second pair of studies was of fundamental character in Raphael's life and did not need to be repeated in the later works.

The final two arrangement studies also belong together. They are the pen drawing RZ 269 in the Städel in Frankfurt and the brush drawings RZ 273 in the Albertina. They document a deepening on the basis of a sacrifice.

The first study (28 x 41,5 cm) (fig. 15).

Since Raphael sought not only to depict the actions of, and the relationships between, the figures, but also to found these in their poses and movements, he once again composed with nudes.

For an example suffice it to indicate how Raphael articulated the row of kneeling figures. The right lower leg of the middle figure echoes that of the figure behind, its left thigh that of the figure in front. Binding the row together thus, this middle figure also gives it tension by turning and stretching its torso. The series of right legs represents a sequence of movement. Knowing the final arrangement study, one might - with Raphael - ask some questions. The last figure stays behind timidly and the front two strive forwards; but is that a 'row', is the row not broken up? And if the progression from timid veneration at the sight of the Holy Sacrament to decisive thrusting towards it is appropriate, then what

is to prevent the young men from reaching it - is their distance from the Host really necessary, their position appropriate? We may anticipate Raphael's answers to these questions. He altered the sequence of motifs, so that the pressing forwards to the Host eventually merges into timid veneration. Here it stops, and the resulting break creates a 'group' instead of a 'row', thus justifying the position and the distance.

Raphael then reworked the beginning and end with regard to their place within the whole series of figures. The positions of those standing lower down in the 'upbeat' group at the left are now well-founded, the poses and movements of each member of the group richer in turns and antitheses. Those further back register more prominently between those nearer to the beholder and all are together in a more spacious circle. Moreover, their common purpose of starting the action, the *storia*, acquires a threefold explicitness: in their standing together, in the gesture leading onwards and - in this study only - in withdrawing, not wanting to become involved. The closing group of two pairs of figures accompanying the Church Fathers is replaced by a single pair, which provides a close by pointing backwards and a transition by pointing onwards.

Raphael bound this closing group to the Church Fathers ornamentally in an arc, creating a clear and simple proportion of figures contained in the groups and rows, namely 4 : 3 : 3 : 3 : (2+2). The closing group is also important thematically. It represents the third conversation of different content, the other two taking place in the 'upbeat' group and in the row behind the throne. The figures draw each other's attention to the book and the Host respectively, thus opening up the possibility of concentrating on a discussion of these two activities among the three depicted - looking at the Host, up to Heaven or in a book. In the form of a motif, this group contained for the first time what from the next arrangement study on was to become the particular and overriding theme of the *Disputa*. Our question as to when and how the particular theme of the *Disputa* arose may therefore be answered thus: not until the fifth and, among those to be discussed, penultimate arrangement study and as one motif among many.

I draw your attention to the fact that the commission Raphael received must have contained very few detailed instructions. As we have seen, it foresaw neither the altar, nor the Host, nor the theme of disputation. Perhaps it stipulated nothing more than the depiction of the Trinity, the *Deesis*, the Evangelists and some saints in Heaven with theologians, prominent among them the Church Fathers, and the faithful on earth.

I shall now provide one half of the answer to the other question directed at the subject matter, namely what preceded this particular theme, what formed - perhaps as more general subject matter - its basis and what did the matter mean to Raphael at first. We have seen that in many sheets of drawings Raphael's concern had been to invent figures lively in movement, turning from and towards each other (*invenzione*) and, further, to bring out concisely, clearly and radiantly in figures, groups and rows the situations of differing conversations and of actions shared by some but distinguished from those of their neighbours (*figurazione*). This he did in two stages: with clothed figures and with explanatory nudes. Raphael's basic theme was to investigate the social, communal reality of human beings living together, to find the motifs in which this reality is realised and to grant them the greatest possible clarity and concision. The 'group' is thus the one theme of his art, *the* compositional element.

To provide the second half of the answer to our question I shall proceed from further observations, arriving at the real significance of the last pair of arrangement studies and progressing without a break to the sixth one to be discussed. First of all, we observe how rigorously Raphael dealt with his own design and note the lack of vanity involved. It is conspicuous that the Church Fathers are now parallel to each other, that their activities of gazing at the Heavenly vision (or finally, in the next version, at the Host) and reading in the Holy Writ are no longer variations but comparisons. We note, in addition, that the figures both immediately behind, and further back from, the thrones are now directed strictly towards the altar. Raphael thus sacrificed the effective arc-shaped dispositions of the Church Fathers and their scarcely visible companions. It is further conspicuous that he separated the groups more distinctly. He raised the two rows of figures behind the thrones higher above the kneeling ones - the ones further back from the elbow upwards, those closer to from the waist upwards. Above all, he separated the 'upbeat' group sharply from the row of kneeling figures (note how the knee of the standing man and the buttock of the rearmost kneeling one push off from one another) and separated the row of kneeling figures from the Church Fathers' group (note how the arm of the foremost kneeling figure is no longer parallel to the throne-end). This led to an increased independence of the three sections and, with regard to the picture plane, to their being placed higher and lower next to each other, like blocks. The almost baroque, stage-like arrangement allowing each element to come forward successively towards the middle, with the altar surrounded and appearing like a vision - this arrangement was thus destroyed. Why did Raphael sacrifice this

successful and effective composition? Because it did not arise out of the figures' actions. The strict perspectival recession was not an *accidente mentale* of the seated Church Fathers or of the personages standing together at the left, neither was the appearance of the altar the intention of anyone present. The final arrangement study (30 x 43,7 cm) (fig. 16) shows how Raphael provided the line of recession with angled divisions, motivating these in the figures' actions. The introductory movement inwards to the right is followed by the figures pressing forwards, then by the standing man, abruptly turned into the line of recession in order to point at Pope Gregory's book. He is followed by the Church Fathers, placed behind one another in the line of recession, and by the final standing figure, abruptly turned against the line of recession in order to guide St. Jerome's gaze to the right again. In this final arrangement, as in the work as executed, the repetition of a single figure at intervals is taken up again. In the executed version the companions of the 'upbeat' figure leading inwards are separated from him to form a group and each of the three single figures turns more sharply from the group behind it, so that the alternation is now emphatic throughout. The final arrangement study is the first to omit a turn upwards to Heaven. In the executed work this is, as I said, placed after the climax of the composition in the altar and monstrance, coming as a surprise on the right in the unexpected action of one of the figures involved.

Raphael renounced, sacrificing a successful and effective arrangement, which was arbitrary, in that it had been imposed on the figures and groups, and strove here, too, for greater objectivity. The real significance of the final pair of studies lies in the fact that the context of the *storia*, the context of the placing, of the disjunctions and links, of the entire sequence of figures and groups is now motivated throughout by the actions of the personages involved. We are now in a position to determine the second half of Raphael's basic theme. If the first half was to investigate the social, communal reality of human beings living together by means of motifs in which this reality is realised and to grant these motifs clarity and concision, the second was to investigate the context of this reality and to rearrange it continually until individuals and communities were thematically, logically and necessarily in the right place (*disposizione*). Thus, 'composition' is, together with the 'group', the central theme of Raphael's art. The transition from the general to the particular theme was effected by Raphael's habitual investigation of middle-sized communities. Thus, in the *Disputa* he brings the greatest possible clarity - for himself and us - to those communities related to God, the saints, the Holy Sacrament and the Holy Writ, in *The School of Athens*

to those uniting Science and Philosophy and in, say, the *Expulsion of Heliodorus* to those experiencing a miracle.

3

In the Madonna drawings the *invention* of a motif formed the basis of the *figuration*. Leonardo would say that an idea as to how a given subject might be represented always formed the basis of the arrangement - '*componimento inculto*', an unordered, unelaborated composition, a first idea. First ideas for the figure complexes of *The School of Athens* and the *Disputa* have not survived, only first ideas for single figures - for example, RZ 265, for the 'upbeat' figure of the young man in the *Disputa*.

Arranging, the main element in the working out of a subject, led, in Leonardo's words, to a '*componimento ordinato*', an ordered composition, by means of '*levando e ponendo*', removing and positioning, until a satisfactory result is achieved.

Working out the entirety of a many-figured *storia* led, thirdly, to a '*componimento ornato*', an elaborated, polished and in all its parts perfected composition.

I wish to discuss briefly this third component, *composizione*, in the last section of my paper, using drawings for *The School of Athens*. By appending the stages of work on the composition of *The School of Athens* to those on the arrangement of the *Disputa* I produce an ideal reconstruction, increasing the actual number of stages for the sake of greater clarity. For it is surely not just accidental that a greater number of important studies have survived for the *arrangement* of the *Disputa* and for the groups of *The School of Athens*. This must be connected with their different subject matter. Both compositions possess a centre: the altar with the monstrance and Plato and Aristotle respectively. In the *Disputa* the figures move towards this centre; cohesion dominates. In *The School of Athens* they stay put; independence dominates.

In *The School of Athens* (5,80 x 8,15 m) (figs. 17 and 19) on the east wall of the present *Stanza della Segnatura* Raphael depicted the community of scientists and philosophers. Fifty-eight figures, linked and separated by *conpar-*

titione into twenty-two groups and single figures, live out a number of activities before our eyes: at the left, in front of the steps, the thirst for, and the acquisition, possession and the passing on of knowledge; higher up, academic controversy and philosophical discussion; in the centre, that free philosophical discourse between equals (Plato and Aristotle) which is a model for others; then, surprisingly placed, Diogenes' demonstration of life according to his teachings; and finally, back on the lowest level to the right, that learning and teaching of knowledge which models life.

Having arrived at the overall arrangement, Raphael built up the composition in *three stages*, each consisting of *two distinct and complementary steps*. In each of the first steps Raphael strengthened the coherence of the whole, in each of the second the individual groups and figures.

In the first stage coherence had already been reached in the *componimento ordinato*. In the second step Raphael then executed the figures and groups individually. I have selected two examples, both in red chalk. The first is a study for an animated group, the fighting men in the relief on the left-hand front wall, and is in the University Gallery, Oxford (RZ 309; 38,2 x 28,2 cm). The second is a study for a restful group, that containing the boy writing in front of the right-hand wall of the school building at Athens, and is in the Städel, Frankfurt (RZ 310; 38,8 x 25 cm) (fig. 20). In the latter Raphael now depicted the individuality of the personages. He represented the fall and cast of their drapery, whether girdled and billowing or drawn up and falling. He depicted how their heads incline, how their hands are held and how their legs and feet stand, step or cross. And he represented their age as an expression of their individual characters, of their vitality and emotional and mental state, and represented it as action. In the youths together, in their group, he also depicted the individual character of this smallest of communities in their actions, their vital, spiritual and mental fellowship in inclination and detachment, similarity and difference.

In the second stage of the *composizione* Raphael worked out the context in which single figures and groups standing next to each other move towards one another and, after clarifying this, again worked out each figure and group finally and definitively.

For the com-position of figures and groups standing next to each other I have again chosen two examples, both drawn precisely in metal and silver point and heightened with white. The first is the - scarcely visible - study RZ 312 in Oxford (24,5 x 32,3 cm) for the *group* containing Euclid and the *figure* Ptolemy (front right), the second RZ 305 in the Albertina (28,7 x 38,7 cm) (fig. 21) for

the *group* containing Pythagoras and the *figure* of a standing man (front left). While the subsidiary figures in the right-hand study already have their final clothing, are considered definitive solutions, Raphael re-studied the chief members of the group and the single figure after models (note the stick) that are like nudes in their close-fitting work clothes. In the left-hand study, too, it is only the figures decisive for the compositional coherence - Euclid and Ptolemy - which are scantily clad. These figures Raphael studied with regard to the position and movement of their legs and feet, to their standing beside and stepping towards other figures, and he clarified proportions, distances and correspondences. Even though the figures were covered up in the final work, with only knees and points of feet in evidence, the results of this ordering and organic motivation are nevertheless to be felt everywhere. Raphael also clarified relationships by means of *chiaroscuro* (note the heightening with white) motivating this too by the movement of the figures in light and shade. Then he drew the single standing figure again on its own, adding the drapery and making alterations to the torso and gestures. In the first stage of the *composizione* Raphael had - to use Leonardo's categories - represented the figures and groups according to their surface appearance, their animation and repose. Now he did so according to the positions, their proximity to, and distance from, each other and in their light and shade.

As examples of the second step - the final, definitive working-out of the individual figures and groups - I have once again selected two studies, both in silver point and heightened with white. The first, RZ 306 in the Städel, Frankfurt (24,5 x 28,5 cm), is for the single figure of Diogenes demonstratively practising his teachings (fig. 22), the second, RZ 307 in Oxford (27,8 x 19,8 cm), for the group of two young men passing by each other on the steps and drawing each other's attention to Diogenes or Plato and Aristotle as models. Whereas life-like animation dominated the red chalk studies for the relief of fighting men and the group with the boy writing, the chief concern in the silver point studies is with balancing and stabilising the figures as a whole, with echoing and linking the limbs themselves. See, for instance, the separate details in the study for Diogenes. Notice (top left) how Raphael formed the shoulder and bend of the arm, letting the inner contours echo one another like those of the thighs on the right, and note how, in the middle, he created an optical unity of foot and leg, in spite of the protruding ankle. Such definitive formulations presupposed clarity not only in the motif, in its animation and repose, but also in its connection with neighbouring figures and groups. The one preceded the other. Incorporating

these separate details, the figures and groups could now be adopted in the cartoon.

In the last stage of the *composizione* Raphael perfected the work twice: first, in its overall relationships in the cartoon and then, once again strengthening the individual figures and groups, on the wall of the *Stanza della Segnatura*. Both versions were regarded as perfection in the Florentine artistic tradition.

In the cartoon measuring 2,8 x 8 m (RZ 313-316 in the Ambrosiana) (fig. 23) Raphael tested the relationships of all the figures and the effect of the pointing ones for the last time. Drawing in charcoal and heightening with white, he also worked out the *chiaroscuro* of the composition on a large scale. By means of light and shade he unified the composition as a whole, creating relationships over and above individual figures and groups - for instance, between the young men passing each other on the steps and the row accompanying Platon and Aristotle higher up on the right. Indeed, the cartoon presents the unity of the composition at it strongest, bound together in monochrome *chiaroscuro*. It represents the perfection of the composition as a sequence of figures and groups.

Finally, Raphael executed the work in colour on the wall of the *Stanza della Segnatura* (5,77 x 8,14 m). The various colours and colour combinations strengthen the individual figures, bind and strengthen the individual groups and distinguish the figures and groups from one another. Thus, at the end Raphael once again emphasised the figures and groups (the element of the composition) as individual and chromatically complementary correspondences, emphasised their differences within the unity of the composition as a whole. And by repeating single colours at intervals across the surface of the wall he created a final series of correspondences and contrasts over and above the logic of the figure sequences.

The careful, systematic and thorough nature of the work process is striking. This solidity is manifest in the work itself; it appears as quality. No colour, light or shade, no placing, interval, nearness or farness, no drapery, hand or toe is unconsidered or unmotivated. Every form and figure, all movement and repose is right. One senses and sees this - and *we* have seen how it came about.

Raphael began with designs for the composition, which he then clarified, motivated logically and rendered in colour. Seen from the conclusion of the process - the patron's acceptance of the final product - the work is built up by repeatedly strengthening the components and the whole and is repeatedly motivated logically. It appears in colour. Its coloured appearance is based on

chiaroscuro. The *chiaroscuro* is motivated by the positions and poses of the figures and groups. The positions and poses of the figures and groups are motivated by the movements of the naked figures. The operation of judgement and powers of discrimination, the operation of Raphael's artistic intelligence is everywhere in evidence.

I shall conclude by condensing the above into four points.

1) The emotional and mental states of human beings are represented in the poses and movements of figures turning to and from each other, and the discontinuous arrangement of the whole is motivated throughout by the human beings acting together or in opposition.

2) The social, communal reality of human beings living together and in opposition is investigated extensively for motifs, figures and groups, disjunctions and links, and the representation of this universal theme is developed systematically in its thematic components.

3) The appearance adopted by this universal theme in the final work is dictated by the variety of formal categories, by careful construction and by logical motivation in many stages.

4) The final point concerns the spontaneity manifest in jumps within the continual development of a composition. Raphael, experiencing his own spontaneity while at work and in his development as a whole, incorporated it in his development of the theme, in the sequence of figures and groups. He did so in the form of so-called fundamental surprises - for example, the breaking through of the disputation in the *Disputa* or the addition of Diogenes' demonstration in *The School of Athens*.

These four aspects, also found in Leonardo and Michelangelo, characterise Raphael's work. For their recognition an isolating term is necessary. In common with scholars in other fields of art - I am thinking of Georgiades' researches into music of the first Viennese school[6] - I choose to call the sum of theses four aspects 'classic'.

[6] Thrasybulos G. Georgiades, *Kleine Schriften*, Tutzing 1977.

3. FIGURE, *CHIAROSCURO* AND COLOUR IN RUBENS' MAKING OF A PAINTING[1]

We have seen in the former lectures what a composition is, what a huge potential it bears, and how Raphael such a complex composition constructed. Raphael, however, did not sketch compositions in colours. I would like to speak in this lecture on the work process of Rubens, who used to prepare his colour compositions also in oil sketches. He is, therefore, a good example to study the whole work process, from the drawn première pensée of a composition to the final oil painting.

It is possible to speak of *chiaroscuro* and colour in an artist such as Rubens by assessing the inner relationship between colour and colour, with particular regard to the primary triad (red, yellow, blue) and the secondary triad (orange, green, violet), the relationships between them, and the dominance of one or two of the colours in a given triad; by assessing, also, the relationship between colour and *chiaroscuro*, which in Rubens' case means grey and brown: all this as it applies to the final appearance of the completed paintings, as they stand and as they hang in churches and collections.

Rubens' colour sketches, too, might be assessed in terms of their final appearance. This would mean considering the ground, the underpainting, the distribution of colour and of *chiaroscuro* - Rubens' technique, in fact - in view of the effect of each individual step on the final appearance of the work. The result would be that the hearer, or the reader, would gain an impression of the final, dense interaction between *chiaroscuro* and the colour based in it, and of the spatial organisation that is established through *chiaroscuro* within a figure sequence or configuration.

---

[1] Translated from the German by David Britt. For the German version, see: Rudolf Kuhn, "Figur, Hell-Dunkel und Farbe bei Rubens." *Festschrift Lorenz Dittmann*, ed. Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer, Klaus Güthlein, Rudolf Kuhn, Frankfurt a.M. 1994, pp. 73-85.

This was what Lorenz Dittmann, for example, did in his important and detailed articles on "Colour in Rubens" (1979) and "*Chiaroscuro* and Configuration in Rubens" (1985), and in his lucid summary of these descriptions in his book on "Colour Arrangement and Colour Theory in Western Painting" (1987)[2].

Today, I intend to adopt a different method, that of tracing Rubens' working process from his initial drawings onward, pursuing his method for its own sake. In doing this, I shall lay a stronger emphasis on the separation between figurative sequence, *chiaroscuro* and colour and, in Rubens' final work, the elements of stratification and building up. One might say that I shall be trying to determine just when a given picture appeared in Rubens' imagination as a coloured image, when as a *chiaroscuro* image, and when as a complex of figures. In assessing the drawings, I shall follow the heuristic programme laid down by Kurt Badt in his "Eugène Delacroix, Drawings" (1946) [3].

I.1

First I shall show you two *premières pensées* and one sketch, all without wash. As you know, in the painting of the old masters a *première pensée* (we owe the French term to Delacroix) was a drawing in which the artist set down an idea for a figure or for a group or for a whole composition (Leonardo's term in this case was *componimento inculto*). This was the idea that occurred to the artist when he started to think about the subject, about the sequence of events, or about the persons that he wanted or was required to represent. As everyone knows, such ideas come suddenly, in a flash, and they tend to fade or to blur equally fast; and so the artist generally jotted down his *premières pensées* rapidly and often quite roughly, using an implement suitable for quick and vigorous drawing. That implement was a pen. Very often, spontaneous ideas of this

---

[2] Lorenz Dittmann, "Versuch über die Farbe bei Rubens", *Kunstgeschichtliche Beiträge*, ed. Erich Hubala, Constance 1979, 37-72; idem, "Helldunkel und Konfiguration bei Rubens", *Intuition und Darstellung. Erich Hubala zum 24. März 1985, ed.* Frank Büttner, Christian Lenz, Munich, 1985, 105-116; idem, *Farbgestaltung und Farbtheorie in der abendländischen Malerei. Eine Einführung*, Darmstadt 1987.

[3] Kurt Badt, *Eugène Delacroix. Drawings*, Oxford 1946; idem, *Eugène Delacroix. Zeichnungen*, Baden-Baden 1951. Now in idem, *Eugène Delacroix. Werke und Ideale*, Cologne 1965.

kind would wholly or partly obliterate each other: 'Like this - no, like this - this bit ought to go like this.' This is often visible in the drawings. What really counted, the idea that had occurred to the artist, was usually left clear: elaborations, elucidations, details were left out. You might say that if a *première pensée* is any good it will be terse and telling: concise (that is, capable of being developed) rather than precise (that is, fully formulated). And this is the case with the two *premières pensées* that I am showing you first.

Première pensée for a Crowning with Thorns (Brunswick; B25, H5)[4]

and

Première pensée for a Crucifixion (Rotterdam; B118r.)

The first *première pensée*[5] (fig. 26).

Christ sits on a block; his right foot is on the ground, with the leg relaxed, but the left leg is drawn back sharply in order to keep his balance. This is apparent from the motif, the contour, and even the hatching. The lower part of the body is seen from the left; but as we proceed upwards the chest, and especially the shoulders, are swivelled round to our right, and the whole body is inclined in that direction, with head hanging forward. Christ's right arm is caught behind his back, and the left forearm extends to one side, with the hand hanging loose. The reed sceptre has been pushed downward into this hand. The convex curves of the shoulders show them to be muscular; the neck is shown as unbent, even tilted backwards to bring the head to greater prominence. Holding himself in balance with his strong left leg, Christ is close to toppling over sideways, but in himself he is unbroken.

Strength and suffering thus appear to us in a body that is like our own - as we sense - and the executioners are densely intertwined with it. The head of the executioner behind Christ's back relates to Christ's head; the man's chest relates, with a change of direction, to Christ's chest; his right fist rests on

---

[4] Numbers prefixed with B refer to Ludwig Burchard, R.-A. d'Hulst, *Rubens Drawings*, Brussels 1963; Numbers prefixed with H refer to Julius S. Held, *Rubens. Selected Drawings*, London 1959.

[5] *Première pensée* for a *Crowning with Thorns*, Brunswick, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum (B25, H5), sheets size 20.7 x 28.8 cm, pen and brown ink, 1601-1602. The stooping figure of a woman visible on the left is actually drawn on the reverse, and therefore does not form part of the *première pensée*.

Christ's shoulder; his eyes are fixed on the back of Christ's neck; and the left upper arm, outstretched with the armpit arched over Christ's head, thrusts forward and out towards us, with its hand and oil lamp, like a second fist, above the crown of Christ's head. We look alternately at Christ and the executioner, understanding one through the other. And see how the forearm and hand of the next executioner on the right - whose head is held on one side, and who, with the fingers of his left hand and the stick in his right hand, fits and forces the crown of thorns onto Christ's head - how his forearm and hand correspond to and contrast with the back of Christ's neck and his shoulder.

The complex movement of the kneeling executioner below is highly important: he stretches his right foot out towards us and is kneeling on his left knee; he extends his right arm across his right leg to brace himself against the ground; looking up and ducking low, he twists round towards Christ to hold out the reed. Like Christ, he has his legs apart. The two figures mirror each other: in the position of their chests, in the alternation between bent and outstretched legs, in the contrast between upward and downward impulses, and in the direction of their shadows. The executioner props Christ up; Christ slumps into his own agony.

It may perhaps be clear from this that Rubens' *première pensée* does not contain an isolated image of Christ, around which everything else has to be fitted, but what Erich Hubala has called a configuration[6], in which the central and subsidiary figures are interwoven into a single process and can be compared with each other, bit by bit, moment by moment.

In the second *première pensée*[7] (fig. 27), the composition is quite different. This is not a complex; the three crucified figures are kept apart, in three different locations. The three crosses are arrayed obliquely, presumably in line with each other. The good thief is furthest away; the bad thief closest to us; Christ is in the centre. The good thief seems to have twisted round on his cross, so that we see him frontally; he turns towards Christ and is closer to Christ on the picture plane. The bad thief hangs parallel to Christ, but he arches back out

---

[6] Erich Hubala, "Figurenerfindung und Bildform bei Rubens. Beiträge zum Thema: Rubens als Erzähler', *Rubens. Kunstgeschichtliche Beiträge*, ed. Erich Hubala, Constance 1979.

[7] *Première pensée* for a *Crucifixion*, Rotterdam, Boymans-van Beuyningen Museum (B118r), sheet size 20.6 x 16.4 cm, pen and brown ink, 1620.

of this parallel position, rearing back over the crossbar, and his chest is level with Christ's head.

The good thief is at rest. Christ is stretched out stiffly in death, with both arms high above his head, which has sunk forward on his chest; the body is tied to the cross by its loincloth. And the bad thief is in motion, writhing in agony.

The figure of Christ has been devised in terms of a comparison between the three figures; in other words, it has been devised in relative terms. Rubens has then used additional figures in order to intensify and further define the contrasts of rest, rigidity and motion. In the figure of Mary Magdalene, we see that one idea has been replaced by another: we see her once at Christ's feet, and then again further to the right, drawn in the same pose. The same happens with the man who is breaking the bad thief's legs with an iron bar, which he does in two different ways; he reappears in the margin.

But in both cases, even if we mentally replace the earlier idea with the later one, we see that the group of figures becomes denser as we approach the thief who is moving: the ladder, the man with the iron bar, Longinus in the man's shadow. The ladder gives the active figures access to the moving thief; by contrast, Christ on the cross, at the highest point on the picture plane, is beyond the Magdalene's reach. The man who strikes the moving figure is in motion like his victim.

Likewise, Rubens has made the Mary Magdalene figure conform more closely to the figure of Christ, by stretching her arms further; no longer embracing the cross but reaching out to a figure that has gone beyond her. The change in the figure of the man who strikes, as recorded in the marginal drawing on the right, has a different effect: now that he is no longer seen from the front but from behind, he has to stand between us and the near thief. This makes the thief, and therefore all three crucified figures, more remote from us; the parallel between Longinus - who is driving the spear into Christ's side, or has just done so - and the man who strikes the bad thief has disappeared, and the figure of the striker closes off the composition.

It is a long way from this to the final version of the painting, which is known as *Le coup de lance, The Spear Thrust*; there, Longinus confronts someone quite other than this particular fellow-executioner, and Mary Magdalene presses towards someone and something quite different, while simultaneously clasping the cross.

In the first case we saw a 'configuration'; now we see an imaginative condensation. At the same time, we see that in this second *première pensée* none of the forms is created by *chiaroscuro*, and that in the first *première pensée* the *chiaroscuro* works only to strengthen the configuration from within. And so, in both subjects, the Crowning with Thorns and the Crucifixion, no general scheme of *chiaroscuro* formed part of the initial idea, the original theme.

As you know, in the painting of the old masters it was often a long way from the *première pensée* to the final painting. The next step was the sketch, which normally took the form of a drawing: what Delacroix called the *croquis.* You know, of course, that here the word sketch is not to be taken in its everyday sense of 'a rough drawing' (Webster): it must be regarded as a technical term for this particular stage in the creative process.

The sketch was a drawing in which the artist no longer tackled the theme, event or persons involved directly but worked on a pre-existing *première pensée*, either on the same sheet or, more likely, in a new drawing on a fresh piece of paper. The artist now set out to turn his idea into a picture; he worked it up, with an eye to the overall look of a painting, a composition. He expanded and enriched it, making it more elaborate and more precise, making the figures more complete, studying the connections and relationships between them and between figures and surroundings, and at the same time clarifying the balance between the particular and the general. He was now working considerably more calmly and more slowly than he did in setting down a *première pensée*. (Leonardo's term was *componimento ordinato*).

I shall now show you a sketch by Rubens, to which, as with the *premières pensées*, no wash has been added. It is:

Sketch for a Battle of the Amazons (London; B50, H2)[8].

There are some things in this sketch (fig. 28) that I cannot decipher, particularly the conclusion of the composition on the right. What can be seen is as follows.

[8] Sketch for the *Battle of the Amazons*, London, British Museum (B50, H2). Sheet size 25.7 x 43 cm, pen and reddish ink (and sepia) over thin pencil or black chalk, dated by H 1598-1602, by B later, probably c. 1615-1616; probably cropped at left and right.

The composition starts on the left with a cloud of dust and a riderless horse prancing leftward over it; nearer to us is a horsewoman, lying on her belly on the ground, parallel to the horse, propping herself up on her left hand and holding the rein in her right, with her head turned in the same direction, in an attempt to hold the horse back; she is in imminent danger of being dragged along behind it.

There follows the main section of the composition. This is dominated by two pairs of horses, obliquely placed from left foreground to right background, aligned with and in collision with each other. Of the pair nearer to us, the one on the left is seen from the front, the one on the right from behind; of the pair further from us, the one on the right is seen from the front, the one on the left from behind.

The left half of this main section:

One horse, riderless, facing us diagonally, with its rider prostrate beneath it, stands braced on its forelegs; its head is turned to the right, and its hind legs trap an Amazon (who faces sideways and away from us); one hoof is caught between her legs. To the right of this we see the back view of the horse behind this first one, and its Amazon rider, who has turned to the right. Directly beyond her is the climax of the composition, which consists of the helmeted heads of two queens, one behind the other, and presumably on horseback, preparing to defend themselves against two Greeks in lionskins, on foot on the left. Above these, two other Greeks on horseback also confront the queens; and further back there are more Greeks still. The mounted Greeks are mere outlines, and those who follow them are barely hinted at; only the locations (the spaces, *spatia*) that they occupy are outlined or indicated, and their relationship to the locations occupied by other figures is defined.

The right half of this main section:

In the foreground, looming large not only in terms of the group but in terms of the whole composition, is the rear view of a horse, whose rider has slid halfway off its back. Caught between its hind legs is a bare-breasted Amazon; her left hand vainly grabs at the horse's leg and her right hand grasps empty space. Across the back of this horse another horse rears up, bearing an Amazon rider who turns to our right and beheads (or has just beheaded) a Greek. To the right is the outline of another horsewoman doing the same thing; either there really are two of them - as with the Amazon queens, the Greek horsemen, and the Greeks in lionskins - or this is a correction. In this right-hand part of the main section there is much that has been intensified: the horses, which on the

left are arranged in sequence, here tumble over each other; the Amazons caught between their hind hoofs are hard to discern on the left, while on the right they are brought up close to us; and the Amazon on the further horse reaches out across the *caesura* into the next section of the composition and swipes off the head of one of its figures.

The final section of the composition follows. This is harder to decipher. In its centre is a horse with its head turned to our right, plunging forward and down, like the horse in the left-hand half of the main section; its rider lolls across its back, with or without his head. In the foreground, another horse has fallen. Just as the central section is more violent on the right than on the left, this far right section answers the 'unattached' figures on the far left with a tight bunch of rolling, falling figures.

We see clearly how Rubens laid out the overall form of a composition - beginning, middle and end; *caesuras* between the main sections; forms bridging those *caesuras* - and also how he used correspondences, duplications, reversals, reflections, intensifications.

But this example also shows very clearly, at top left and top right, how Rubens first suggested his figures - and especially their location in the picture and their relation to each other - in outline, and how he created air and bodies, using hatching and shadow to bring out the clear identity of the motif, the solidity of the figure, and the spatial distance. We also see that this clarification of context is the main function of *chiaroscuro*, and of the highly rhythmic alternation of light and shade within it (see especially the advancing horse, left of centre). Here, as in the *premières pensées* that I have already discussed, no overriding, general *chiaroscuro* has been established as a theme or partial theme in its own right.

I.2

I have now shown you two *premières pensées* and one sketch without any wash. There now follow two *premières pensées* and one sketch to which Rubens did add a wash. This means that he worked out the *chiaroscuro* as early as the sketch, or even the *première pensée* itself. He frequently did this, as you know; and always for the good reason that the *chiaroscuro* is central to the theme.

The first *première pensée*:

Première pensée for Susanna and the Elders (Montpellier; B70, H20)[9]

The *première pensée* (fig. 29) shows Susanna, nude, seen frontally, and seated on a rock or mound of earth on the lower part of a sheet. Presumably bracing herself with her right foot, which is concealed by the end of her sheet, she swings round to her left, our right, so that her shoulder and breasts are seen laterally. With a single motion of both arms she holds on to the cloth, which is blowing in the wind; her upraised left arm sweeps the cloth round in an arc, the end clasped in her fist; with a single motion of both arms she seeks to cover herself, and looks over her shoulder, her face fully visible, at the head of the Elder who is reaching out to snatch her sheet. All this was probably visible in the original pen drawing.

The wash adds the darkness of the rock or earth, that of the water, perhaps the *chiaroscuro* of the foaming cascade, the dark of the flying hair, the half-darkness of the presumably rocky setting, and the darkness above and around Susanna, the threat that encompasses her as she wheels round. By establishing the contrast between the dark surroundings and Susanna's intensely white body, the wash also reveals that the light of visibility has caught her unawares; the darkness on her legs, belly, breast, neck and cheek suggests that she is trying to return to her concealment while at the same time - as we see from the light on her face - she is also turning back, away from the darkness, to see what the Elder (himself lurking in the gloom with his arm and hand reaching out into the light) is doing, and what he intends to do: which is to unveil her and have her stripped bare in the full glare of daylight.

The wash is applied just as swiftly, as vigorously and as tellingly as the original drawing; generically, it is part of the *première pensée*.

I shall show you the second *première pensée*, a wide oblong format with wash, without detailed commentary:

---

[9] *Première pensée* for *Susanna and the Elders*, Montpellier, Bibliothèque universitaire (B70, H20), sheet size 21.5 x 15.8 cm, pen and brown ink and brown wash, dated by H c. 1608-12, by B to early Antwerp period.

Première pensée for the Death of Hippolytus (Bayonne; B39, H21)[10]

Hippolytus, the son of Theseus and the Amazon queen, Hippolyta, was loved by his stepmother, Phaedra; but Hippolytus had vowed his chastity to Artemis, and rejected her overtures. She killed herself after accusing him to Theseus (her husband and his father) of making an attempt on her virtue. Theseus invoked the wrath of Poseidon on his innocent son, who was slain by a monster from the deep.

Here, too, light and shade are conceived from the start as part of the theme: the darkness of the surging waves that turn into a sea-serpent and overwhelm Hippolytus' chariot-horses; the shadow along the shore line, which hollows out the nutshell of the chariot, and into which, at the same time, Hippolytus collapses and his terrified companions flee. And, in contrast to this, you see a brilliant light, on the serpent again, which catches parts of the horses, the body of Hippolytus, and the backs of the fleeing figures.

Now for a sketch (fig. 30) by Rubens that includes wash:

Sketch for an Entombment (Amsterdam; B38, H37)[11]

The action takes place near the entrance of a burial grotto. The entrance itself, apparently curtained with creepers, is on the right. We see seven figures, sketched in a group, some with clearly defined facial features. We see John descending the last few steps, watching where to put his feet; on his chest, and cradled in his arms, he supports the head, shoulders, and upper back of the body of Christ, which is wrapped in a winding sheet. We see the corpse, with lower back and haunches sagging down, and a great swag of sheet curving beneath. We see Joseph of Arimathaea, bare-headed, some steps higher, twisting and bending over the body, grasping Christ's legs near the ankles, both above and

[10] *Première pensée* for the *Death of Hippolytus*, Bayonne, Musée Bonnat (B39, H21), overall sheet size 22 x 32.1 cm (Rubens made his drawing on two facing pages of a bound sketchbook, and a strip in the gutter consequently remained blank; a later owner cut the blank strip away, almost entirely, and butted the two halves of the drawing together; they therefore do not make a perfect fit), pen and india ink and wash, dated by H c. 1608-1612, by B c. 1610; cropped at right.

[11] Sketch for an *Entombment*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (B38, H37), sheet size 22.2 x 15.3 cm; pen and brown ink and brown wash, c. 1615.

below the sheet. Behind him, and higher up, we see Mary: her head is at the highest point, and she looks down at Christ, whose head is at the lowest point. Beside her we see one or perhaps both of the other Maries, roughly outlined. In front of Mary, halfway between her and Christ's chest and head, and at the central point of all the subsidiary figures, a smaller and probably younger person interposes himself: crooking his arms above his head, he holds a torch in his right hand and shields his eyes from its light with his left, in order to contemplate Christ. Lastly, we see Nicodemus (in a turban), who counterbalances Joseph of Arimathaea just as John counterbalances Mary. Nicodemus, holding up the sheet to his own shoulders, is looking at the interposed figure.

I also draw your attention to the way in which Christ's chest continues the line of John's - a feature of one figure echoed by the corresponding part of another figure - and then how Christ's back and haunches sag, with belly and thighs swivelled out to face us; and how this twist of the thighs is intensified in the twist and countertwist of Joseph of Arimathaea: a feature of one figure reinforced by the corresponding feature of another figure. And so the three figures are interlocked: Joseph of Arimathaea with Mary, John with Nicodemus, and each with the others.

In this sketch, Christ is twisted so that his belly and thighs are turned towards us; and, where his left arm was initially concealed by his body, Rubens has subsequently made it fully visible, at first laying it along the thigh and then lifting it towards Mary. The picture is there primarily to tell us a story, to narrate an event; at the same time, the body, slung in its sheet, is displayed for our contemplation and devotion: and this element of contemplation is then introduced into the action itself through the youthful figure who thrusts his way into the centre. And so something of the essence of devotional imagery has been introduced into the narrative.

Michelangelo, in his depictions of the *Pietà*, had already addressed the idea that the dead Christ, brought down earthward from the cross, is completely absorbed and subsumed into the human group that surrounds him: theologically speaking, that the death of Christ is the true consummation of his Incarnation. Caravaggio, in an *Entombment* (later taken up by Rubens), had shown Christ being lowered into a grave that is almost entirely cut off by the lower edge of the painting, so that it exists, so to speak, in our space, outside the image. In the same way, in this version by Rubens we see that Christ is turned to face our way, as an object of contemplation, but also that he is being moved away from a distant entrance, into a cave, and towards us.

As for the wash itself: it is applied very calmly and precisely. It appears in two sections, and in three gradations of tone. In the figures, and above and below them, it appears in two comparatively light tones; on the right and left sides it is darker. This application of one, two and three gradations of darkness has created a sharp contrast, causing the central area around Christ to radiate light. This *chiaroscuro* fills the whole picture area.

Formally, the darkness is related to the figures: note that the dark area on the right makes a vertical contrast with the figures, and that the end of the sheet and the folds of Joseph of Arimathaea's robe drop away vertically; that the darkest area on the left is bounded below by the diagonal folds of John's garment, thus repeating his stride downward; and that the dark areas at top centre and right terminate below in an arc, against which the heads of the Maries stand out, and that this is mirrored by the sheet in which Christ's body is slung. Related in this way to the configuration of the bodies, the *chiaroscuro* stabilises the figure composition, the 'configuration', in relation to the image as a whole. As work proceeded, Rubens then had to extend these two and three levels of darkness to encompass the subterranean gloom into which the figures are advancing.

It is clear, I think, that this is a sketch, and that the wash is in keeping with the function of a sketch. To repeat some of the definition that I gave earlier:

'The artist now set out to turn his idea into a picture; he worked it up, with an eye to the overall look of a painting, a composition. He expanded and enriched it, making it more elaborate and more precise; making the figures more complete; studying the connections and relationships between them and between figures and surroundings; and at the same time clarifying the balance between the particular and the general. He was now working considerably more calmly and more slowly than he did in setting down a *première pensée*.'

There is nothing in this sketch that would compel us to conclude that the *chiaroscuro* was already there in the *première pensée,* as part of the artist's original idea - as it was in the case of the *Susanna* and the *Hippolytus*; and yet, if we consider the central importance of the intruding torch-bearer, and the attention paid to him by Nicodemus, we cannot dismiss the possibility that the inherent contradiction of an illuminated darkness, of a dead man lighted within an arc of his loved ones, had been part of the original theme.

II

As you know, Rubens produced not only drawn but also painted sketches, both in grisaille (which I leave to one side on this occasion) and in colour. In his colour sketches, he bases himself on the *chiaroscuro* and works out the colouring as a separate stage in the development of the composition. I shall show you two such colour sketches.

The first is one in which colour is juxtaposed and set against *chiaroscuro*, and in which colours are contrasted at a distance.

Colour sketch for a Last Supper (Moscow; HOISK[12] *340)*[13]

Like almost all Rubens' colour sketches, this is painted on a wooden panel (fig. 31). It formed a preliminary stage in the painting of an altarpiece (now in Milan) that was intended for a Chapel of the Holy Sacrament; and it accordingly represents the Institution of the Eucharist.

All the figures are gathered around a circular table; on the left, a row of three, with an added figure behind them, leads into the central group; on the right, a row of three, also with an added figure behind them, emerges towards us out of depth. In the background, behind the party at the table, is a curtain, filling three-quarters of the width of the painting. In the right foreground there are vessels of water (a reminder of the Washing of the Feet). Above, and further away, are an open book and a candle (the final altarpiece reveals that this book is the Book of Psalms); and further still is a door, or else a cabinet made to hold the Holy Scriptures.[14]

The central group consists of five figures. The figure composition as a whole starts with an Apostle on the left, seen from behind, seated with legs wide astride, leaning forward towards Christ; the central group, before the group on the right, concludes with Judas, who is also on the near side of the table, but marked out by the way he is seen in profile, seated with legs crossed and turning away from Christ to gaze out of the picture in our direction. Between these two Apostles, Jesus appears on the far side of the table, flanked by Peter and John.

---

[12] Numbers prefixed with HOISK refer to Julius S. Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens*, Princeton 1980.

[13] Colour sketch for a *Last Supper*, Moscow, Pushkin Museum (H OISK 340), panel, 45.8 x 41 cm, c. 1631.

[14] This is according to Held, *The Oil Sketches, op. cit*.

On the table is the chalice on a dish; Christ has taken up the bread, is blessing it, and looks upward.

All the Apostles to the left, with various gestures and postures of reverence and awe, direct attention towards Jesus' action, thus preparing the viewer for it. On the right, the two near Apostles, closing off the composition, do the same; the two more distant Apostles, on the other hand, are talking about Judas and pointing to him, cutting across the attentiveness of all the others.

Judas, with whom the narrative continues, and who concludes the central portion of the figure composition, is the only one who encroaches on the figure of Christ; he is dark against the light, like the moon beginning to eclipse the sun (the simile is Julius Held's). He looks out at us appraisingly: a hint at our own part in the story. We have a tranquil zone of rapt devotion and then a disruptive conclusion. Christ's prophecy of his own betrayal is not shown; the betrayer does not relate to Christ himself, as such, but to the institutor of the Eucharist.

Now for the *chiaroscuro* and the colour. Rubens' manner of working is clearly shown by the colour sketches for the Medici cycle, now in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, which are worked up to varying degrees. He first gave the panel a white ground and then added a veil of grey stripes, through which the underlying white could be seen. Then, on the prepared panel, Rubens drew the composition in ochre, both figures and objects, and shaded the darker areas with a darker ochre.

It seems to me important that on the panel this produced more or less what we have just seen in the sketch on paper of the Entombment. Rubens thus began each successive stage of the process by recapitulating what he had achieved in the previous stage, and based his further elaboration on that. Then, and only then, he developed the colour.

Even taken in isolation, the colour sketch in Moscow would reveal that the *chiaroscuro* was worked out first. Most of the Apostles appear in *chiaroscuro*. Only after this were the colours applied and gradually worked out in relation to each other. The starting point here was probably the red in Christ's mantle. This red is countered by the brownish tone of the mantles of the foreground Apostles: colour countered by *chiaroscuro*. The mantle of the youthful Apostle on the left is muted towards lilac, and that of the one on the right - Judas - is heightened towards yellow: these colours are related to the *chiaroscuro*; they are extracted from the *chiaroscuro*. There is more to this: across the table, Peter and John are related to the foreground Apostles. Peter, on the far side, wears

dark blue; Judas, on the near side, wears a light blue robe under the mantle just mentioned. And so Peter and Judas are kept apart in space and distinct in colour. Again, John wears lilac, and the Apostle in the left foreground has a touch of lilac in his mantle.

The relation between Judas, John and Christ is a complex one to unravel. John leans towards Christ; he wears shifting colours, shot with lilac and pink. In Judas' gown there is light blue; in his mantle touches of yellow; in John there is pink (triad). In John there is lilac and pink (urgent love, tending towards warmth); Christ has a lilac robe and the aforementioned red mantle. But even the *chiaroscuro* itself retains an importance of its own, a sacramental one: for the chalice is golden-brown, the plate and tablecloth are silvery-grey, and the bread is brown (the Mystery).

Colour sketch for an Entombment (Munich; H OISK 366)[15]

The other colour sketch in Munich (fig. 32), made for an altarpiece in Cambrai, is further developed in terms of colour. In it the different colours - and colour and *chiaroscuro* as such - are not kept spatially distinct and consistently opposed and juxtaposed to each other, but strong and muted colours are arranged spatially in coherent sequences and harmonies. Within the familiar cave or grotto, with its half-overgrown entrance in the far background on the right, the composition shows the Entombment, or more properly the Lamentation and the Washing of Christ's Body.

Christ is in the centre: the subdivisions of the body are emphasised. It is if he had been taken apart: one head, two outstretched arms, a trunk, and two legs at contrasted and divergent angles. The head, the upper back, the left upper arm, lie flat on the arms of John and Mary. The body is arched back, with a sharp kink at the waist. The arms are spread-eagled and relaxed, but the thighs converge from widely spaced buttocks towards the knees; the lower legs diverge again. The left leg is bent as if to kneel, with the lower leg angled out to the right; the angle of this bend is echoed, and the kneeling posture defined, in the figure that concludes the composition, that of Mary Magdalene. Christ's right hip descends vertically from the bend of the waist, in a sitting position; the lower leg projects towards us, below. The strength of the hip and leg, and also

[15] Colour sketch for an *Entombment*, Munich, Alte Pinakothek (H OISK 366), panel, 83.7 x 66.7 cm, c. 1616.

the kink at the waist, are anticipated in the figure that starts off the composition, that of John, and they are emphasised by the corner of the *sarcophagus*, which is placed slightly obliquely. The crown of thorns rests against it, below; in front of it are the four nails.

Just as one human head and body are attended by twice two limbs, the one Christ is attended by five times two persons. These figures alternate between action and contemplation. Reading backwards from the conclusion of the composition, we have: two women in action, washing Christ's feet; two men in contemplation of Christ's head; two women in action, bringing water and spices; then Mary with her companion and John with his, all in grieving contemplation. Mary and John alone are also set apart from their female companions, so that they are both isolated and symmetrical in relation to each other.

I notice something about the spatial proximity of feet and hands, those exploratory, feeling parts of the body. Notice how Christ's dangling right hand is close to John's foot; how John's right hand lies in Christ's armpit, and John's left hand on Christ's shoulder, near his neck; how Mary's open right hand is above Christ's head, the left hand of Christ above the hand of Joseph of Arimathaea, and how the women on the right surround the left foot of Christ, one lifting the bowl to her breast, the other scooping water into her palm and feeling the wound on Christ's foot with fingers outspread. What we see is a multiplication of sensory feeling.

Now for the colour that Rubens has devised for this scene. Christ, with his body set off, and partly concealed, by the winding sheet, half-sits and half-lies on a stone that is grey in front and brown on the side. Christ is dead: his body is beginning to stiffen. Rubens makes this - death and the onset of *rigor mortis* - into the centre of the colour arrangement and extracts from it the rule governing the sequence of colours. The *rigor* that is beginning to affect the body shows itself in the head and the limbs; the head, arms and legs contain much blue and grey; the torso contains much yellow; there is a shift from pallid to intense colour.

In colour terms, the conclusion of the composition is easier to define than the beginning and the middle. Mary Magdalene wears a yellow dress, Nicodemus a red mantle, and the sky, in its lower half, is blue: these three colours are clear and bright and placed one above the other, with intervals between: they form the primary triad. With these clear, bright, separated but concordant colours the composition ends; they are attached to the respective active and contemplative involvement of human beings, and to the heavens. Between these

colours, however, there are others: grey, tending towards blue, on the standing woman on the right; above, the bright whiteness of the sheet, on Nicodemus' arm; then tones of brown on Joseph of Arimathaea; a lighter brown on the rock to the right; finally the clouds in the upper sky, lighter, tinged with yellow. The conclusion as a whole consists in a threefold shift from drab to bright colour, just as in Christ's body there is a shift from pallid to intense colour.

Now let us look at the colour sequences on the left. The most important colours here are the red of John's mantle and the blue of Mary's. Two sequences interlock.

The first sequence consists of the head, shoulder and arm of John; the upper arm, head, upper chest, left arm of Christ; and the arm, shoulder and head of Mary. These stand out against the companions, who are almost entirely absorbed into the brown of the cave, to form an arched complex, once more made up of shifts of colour. The companions are drab, John and Mary are colourful; in between, Christ is pale, with the arch of the cave above him: this embodies mourning, grief and lamentation for Christ.

Now for the second sequence, slightly staggered in relation to the first. It includes the two women stepping down from above, and largely suppresses the two companions in the niche in the cave. We notice that under his red robe, as the position of his raised leg reveals, John wears an undergarment in a muted steel blue; and that the first of the descending women wears a steel-blue skirt. John's steel blue is preceded, in the robe that covers his other leg, by red; first descending woman's steel blue is followed, in the second descending woman, by a brownish grey, not yet fully worked out. In this sequence, the central focus is no longer on the head and thorax of Christ, nor on mourning, grief and lamentation, but on the body of Christ as such - *Corpus Christi* - not alone but in conjunction with Mary: the central focus of every *Pietà*. Christ is not seen in a pallid blue-grey tonality but in intense tones with a high proportion of blue; and Mary is also in blue: *Corpus Christi* dominates. This sequence ascends towards the left, in highly distinct steps: John's left leg, John's right leg, Christ's body, Mary's shoulder, first descending woman, second descending woman; just as the body of Christ descends towards the kneeling woman. However, the descending women, in this sequence, turn their attention towards the right, towards the act of washing, with which they have come to help; and so, within this sequence, they leave Mary and John alone with Christ. The women on the right are arranged one above the other, the men side by side. Strictly, however, to clarify the sequence, they need to be seen as one behind the other. The colour

scheme displays and organises the content in combinations and sequences that are new and additional to the sequence of figures.

These three stages of work - the *premières pensées*, their elaboration in sketches and their development into colour - constitute sufficient preparation in themselves for a painting, and I would be happy to leave it there; but often, especially in the early part of his career, Rubens went through one more step. He drew studies (what Delacroix called *l'étude*). The preparatory study for an Old Master painting was, as you know, a drawing in which the artist studied objects or parts of objects in the real world, including works of art: objects that he literally saw before his eyes. Mostly he did so at leisure; for compositions, he needed above all to make studies of movement and expression, for which he used models who assumed the posture and displayed the expression that he needed for his composition. To illustrate this a nude study for an executioner setting up the cross (B56, H76)[16] - in the painting he becomes a soldier in armour - and a nude study for a Christ on the cross (B55)[17] in the same *Elevation of the Cross* should suffice; the artist's matter-of-fact concentration on the practicalities of picture-making, the depiction of movement and expression, is reflected by the fact that the same young man could serve as model both for the executioner and for Christ.

By extracting from Rubens's working process, successively, the *première pensée*, the sketch, and the colour sketch, I have tried to make it clear that Rubens worked in a well-defined and disciplined routine, clearly distinguishing each step from the next, and that he successively worked out first the relationship between figures, then the *chiaroscuro* - except where this formed part of the original thematic concept - and finally the colour, clarifying and enriching the thematic content and organisation in many ways as he went along[18]. Rubens separated these tasks and these steps: he separated them and thereby allowed first the relationship between the figures, then the relationship between light and shade, then the relationship between colours, to assert themselves in turn, each being taken in isolation.

---

[16] The Hague, Collection of the Queen of the Netherlands.

[17] Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum.

[18] In some cases, Rubens started the working process by a colour sketch. This usually happened if the composition was to be made up of only few figures. This is the case of the many colour sketches for the cycle of Torre de la Parada.

Occasionally, it is possible to show that these phases can still be distinguished in the finished painting, and that each possesses a separate theme, as I tried to do in my article on the Neuburg *Last Judgement* (now in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich), in which the theme of the figure composition is the 'Triumph of Christ', that of the *chiaroscuro* composition is 'Judgement as Separation', and that of the colour composition is 'The Transfiguration of the Elect, by Contrast with the Damned'.[19]

III

The goal of the working process is the finished painting. I would now like to comment on three altarpieces without considering the *chiaroscuro* and colour stages separately - because I have not studied the paintings sufficiently closely from this point of view - but taking the *chiaroscuro* and colour together, with the emphasis on colour. These three altarpieces are very different from each other in colour composition.

In the central panel of the altar of the *Deposition* in Antwerp Cathedral, the colours are set out spatially around a centre, making their effect jointly in relation to each other.

In the altarpiece of *The Spear Thrust* in the Antwerp Museum, by contrast, the colours and colour combinations are set out spatially in a sequence, with a climax and a conclusion, making their effect separately in relation to each other.

Finally, in the altarpiece of *The Carrying of the Cross* in the Brussels Museum, the colours and colour combinations occupy a spatial sequence in such a way that each part of the sequence is modified, transformed, in relation to what goes before.

---

[19] Rudolf Kuhn, "Peter Paul Rubens. Das große *Jüngste Gericht* für die Jesuitenkirche in Neuburg a.D. Ein Kunstwerk als Geschichtsdenkmal und als politische Tat", *Land und Reich, Stamm und Nation ... Festgabe für Max Spindler zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. Andreas Kraus, vol. 2, (Schriftenreihe zur Bayerischen Landesgeschichte, vol. 79), Munich 1984, 91-105.

If we were to ignore the spatial content and use a temporal analogy, then the first painting would be an image of stillness, the second an image of progressive motion, and the third an image of transformative motion.

Now for the paintings themselves. I come first to the

Altarpiece of the Deposition (Antwerp Cathedral)[20]

When the altarpiece is closed, we see on the outside of the shutters the towering figure of St Christopher with the Christ Child on his shoulders, wading through the waters towards the viewer. That is the left-hand half; on the right is a hermit, shining his lantern on the Christ Child carried by the giant and recognising him.

When the altarpiece is open, all three panels show variations on the theme of the carrying of Christ. On the left is the *Visitation*; on the right is the *Presentation in the Temple*; and in the centre is the *Deposition*. When we watch the altarpiece being opened and closed, we witness the overwhelming contrast between the gigantic St Christopher and the composition within; but also the overwhelming contrast between the figure of St Christopher and that of the hermit.

The shutters, both inside and out, were painted two years after the central panel; so it may be that this was intended and designed to stand alone. We shall concentrate entirely on this central panel (fig. 33).

The composition starts off on the left with one of the Maries, the kneeling one, whose right shoulder, arm and hand anticipate the right shoulder, arm and hand of Christ; she looks past Mary Magdalene to see what John is trying to convey to her. Her overall direction is obliquely upwards. The composition concludes on the right with the three visible rungs of the ladder, in front of which we see the inscription and the sponge, the bowl containing blood, the nails and the crown of thorns. This ladder is directed obliquely downwards.

The human figures are differently arranged: the kneeling women are shifted out of alignment with the axis of the cross; they kneel obliquely in relation to it. Mary and John, too, form a diagonal path that leads into the wide ob-

[20] Altarpiece of *The Deposition*, Antwerp Cathedral, panels, central panel 420 x 310 cm, shutters 420 x 150 cm, 1611-1614.

long area defined by the four other, higher figures that maintain the span of the cross. Christ is lowered out of this wide area and into the narrow path; four men lower him from above, and he is received by the three women and by John, who stands at the bend and effects the bend - the curve of his back equates with the curve of Christ's side. All are trying to insert Christ into the winding sheet in which he is to be wrapped. Four ladders lean against the cross, two on the far side and two on this side. Each of the two men at the top stands on a separate ladder, as do Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea.

The composition starts off with the kneeling woman on the left; then comes Mary Magdalene, who looks as if she might be her sister. She is closer to Christ, and his foot rests on her shoulder. She has caught hold of his calf with her right hand, and with her left she pulls the sheet over him, covering him, and remains rapt in contemplation of his body. Then follows John, to her right; John has his left foot planted on the ground and his right foot on the second rung of the ladder; he stands, bent backward from the waist, and curves his arms round to take the weight of the thigh, hip and side on his own chest. Mary has just stepped in closer from the left; she casts up her right hand in grief, stretches out her left hand to her dead son, and looks up into his vacant eyes. John is close to Christ's body; she looks into his eyes from a distance.

The other figures above are engaged in a practical, apparently well-coordinated action. Because John twists round, Nicodemus, too, is opposite him. Nicodemus holds the sheet in his right hand and supports the dead man under the arm with his left, waiting for Joseph of Arimathaea to move. The disciple at top left leans forward over the arm of the cross, balancing with one leg in the air, holds the sheet in his left hand, and has allowed the dead man's shoulder to slide down out of his right hand. The older man, at top right, props himself on the end of the cross-arm with his left hand, holds the sheet in his teeth, and grips the dead man's right arm, with his eye on Joseph of Arimathaea. Finally, Joseph of Arimathaea himself is climbing backwards down the ladder, his eye on the disciple at top left, and gripping both body and sheet from behind, so that the dead man can rest on his outstretched arms. This altarpiece tells a story, one rich in actions and motifs; but at the same time it offers the *Corpus Christi* as an object for the devotion of the beholder. Christ forms a part - and indeed the centre - of the visible action; but at the same time he is withdrawn from it onto a level of contemplative devotion. In death, Christ shows himself in the midst of human beings: the same human beings who bestir themselves to pay him a last service. Once again, we have a 'configuration' that fills the whole

panel. Once again, just as Christ's body relates to its paired limbs, the *Corpus Christi* itself relates to the paired arrangement of the helpers.

As for the colour composition:

The kneeling figure - one of the Maries - with whom the composition starts off (unless, that is, she is inserted after the start: a question that calls for further consideration) wears a violet dress, with white highlights. The second figure, Mary Magdalene, wears a green dress, with yellow highlights. Conversely, the first figure wears a golden yellow shawl around her shoulders and Mary Magdalene a white one; correspondingly, the hair and skin colours of the first figure are more gold-like, golden-brown; those of the second figure are yellow, blond, white. And so the two figures belong together in terms of colour.

Departing from the organisation of the figures into an oblong at the top and a path below - from which and into which, respectively, Christ is lowered - the two Maries relate in reverse to the two figures at the very top. The man at top left wears a green robe, like the Magdalene, except that it is silk in her case and matt cloth in his. The man at top right echoes the violet of the first of the Maries, but this is now transformed into a pale lilac-grey, with extensive grey highlights that match his grey-white hair.

The green of the Magdalene's dress also has an importance in preparing for the garment worn by John: luminous red, with black shadows, this exerts a powerful supporting thrust.

Mary, Christ's mother, wears a mid-blue mantle, barely highlighted with white, and under it a grey-blue dress, the blue of which comes close to the blue of the inward shadows of her figure: that is to say, the shadows of her skin. Joseph of Arimathaea, on the ladder to the right, opposite Mary, wears a dark blue velvet robe. He is balanced, in turn, by Nicodemus in a dark gold brocade mantle with violet collar and cuffs and a dark red velvet cap; the violet portions of his costume, in particular, match the robe of Joseph of Arimathaea to the right.

The skin of Christ in the centre of the painting has blue shadows in it, but is otherwise yellowish. The colour of his body resembles nothing but that of his mother, the light portions of which are less pallid, less dead looking. None of the other skin colours resembles his at all. The body of Christ stands out against the sheet, and his skin contrasts with the colour of the sheet, which is white with grey shadows. The winding sheet complements the colour of the dead.

The luminous red of John's robe has a specific context and a sequential position of its own. This red, which is intense but not radiant, relates to the mysterious red of Christ's wounds, and particularly to that of the spear thrust in his side, which is repeated in the bloodstains on the loincloth and the streaks of blood on the arms. Sequentially, it belongs to a progression that runs from the dark velvety red of Nicodemus' cap by way of the wound in Christ's side and John's red garment to the bowl of blood on the ground.

The earth and the cross are brown, with other tones that relate to the brocade; the inscription is white, like the winding sheet. The colours of the accessory figures all recur, either immediately or not far away, in the landscape or in the sky: in particular, the skin colour of the first of the Maries, on the left, reappears in the golden-yellow shaft of light on the left, and this in turn reappears, somewhat lighter, in the bowl on the right, with its mysterious effect of blood against gold.

I now come to the second painting, the

Altarpiece of The Spear Thrust (Le coup de lance)
(Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp)[21]

(Fig. 34): In from the left, with only its forequarters, neck and head visible, comes a horse: the right hoof is raised and tucked back to form an arc; the neck and head are lowered to form another arc. On its back, with only his arms, chest and head visible, is a soldier, in armour, his hands resting on the bay horse's neck, holding the reins loosely and leaning forward to observe the thief on the far right. This soldier thus immediately forms a connection between the first and third parts of the composition.

Partly obscured by the head and neck of the bay, a dapple-grey faces away from us. On the rounded back of this quiet animal sits Longinus. He has swung round to the right, in his armour, and leans back into his billowing cloak; carefully, with his little finger extended, he manipulates the spear that leads us to the central crucified figure, that of Christ. And so his gaze and his spear unite the first and second parts of the composition.

---

[21] Altarpiece of *The Spear Thrust* (*Le coup de lance*), Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, panel, 424 x 310 cm, 1620.

The first part of the composition concludes with the good thief, who hangs in full view, above and between Longinus and his horse's head, his body crossed by the spear; his bound left arm and the turn of his head impel him towards Christ, as he cries out to heaven.

In the centre of the picture Christ hangs. The body and the cross are bound together by the loincloth; and the body is additionally tied to the cross with cords. He is dead. His head and limbs are beginning to stiffen and to change colour; the spear has pierced his side, and is now being withdrawn. Deep down, and beyond the cross, we see the heads and shoulders of a turbaned older man and a bareheaded younger man, whose lines of sight cross: one looks at Longinus and the other at Christ.

This is the central, but only the second, part of a composition in four parts, each of which consists of three persons. The first part consists of the mounted soldier, Longinus and the good thief; the second consists of Christ and the two figures at the foot of the cross; the third consists of Mary Magdalene, the climbing soldier and the bad thief; the fourth consists of Mary and her two companions.

In each group, one figure has its head covered and two are bareheaded. In the first part the first figure wears a helmet; in the others the central figures wear, respectively, a turban, a helmet, and a cloak drawn over her head. Parts one to three culminate in the three figures on the crosses; parts two and four point respectively to Christ and to Mary. To balance the weight of the horses on the left, the mass on the right is increased by having both the third and fourth parts follow after the centre; there is a denser mass of figures on the right, just as was intended in the *première pensée*, which I showed earlier.

Now for the third part. Mary Magdalene seems to have sunk to her knees on the near side of Christ's cross, but close to it. Her head, held slightly to one side, with its flowing hair, is close to Christ's feet, and she raises her eyes to look past them, raising her outstretched arms and hands, both on the near and far sides of the cross, in a plea to Longinus to hold his hand. Nearer to us, the ladder leads to the bad thief; a soldier in armour is climbing down backwards, one knee projecting over the Magdalene's head, his iron bar firmly grasped in his fist, looking to one side and across his shoulder, up at the thief whose legs he has just broken. Closer and higher still is the thief, twisting and hurling himself upward; in his agony he has torn his left foot off the nail and cries out to heaven. Notice how the Magdalene, the soldier, and the thief (all of whom are seen from the left) each shoot out one knee; how in all three cases the knee con-

verges with the head and the corresponding arm to speak of entreaty, brutality, and agony.

The fourth part concludes the composition. We see John stepping out, centre right; he weeps, twisting his head and shoulders to one side, burying his face in his cloak. He is escorting Mary; he leans against her, as she stands still, wringing her hands, turning her head to look over her shoulder, raising her eyes to heaven in her lamentation. She is supported by a woman, who looks upward with hands clasped.

It is worth noticing a number of ways in which the intensity of the depiction is heightened: the position of Longinus' dagger; how the eye of the dapple grey sits next to the nail in the foot of the good thief, 'seeing' it; how the blood from the wound in Christ's side runs a little way down the spear-point and then spurts out in a curve onto the neck of the dapple grey. Colossians 1.19-20: 'For it pleased the Father that in him [Christ] should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.' (Compare Romans 8.22: 'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.') Note, too, the way in which the Magdalene's hair is linked with Christ's blood as it trickles down the upright of the cross.

As for the colour composition:

The first part of the composition. The first horse is a bay, the second a dapple grey: they are thus subdued in colour. In the brown of the bay there is, however, a lot of red and pink, and in its mane grey and grey-black, and in the coat of the dapple-grey there is blue-grey. Here, at the outset, the tones include all those colours that reappear at the close of the composition as local hues. Red appears above all in the billowing cloak of Longinus.

In the following, second part of the composition, the two figures crouching at the foot of Christ's cross wear pink (the younger man) and blue-grey (the older man); the Magdalene, tied in colour terms to the remote figures by the lightness of this part of the composition, wears a yellow dress.

In the following, third part of the composition, the soldier on the ladder wears a tunic, pink once more, and the sky in front of him and below his knee is bluer than it is elsewhere in this area; and so he generates a colour harmony similar to that of the figures crouching at the foot of the cross: and between these two harmonies, pink and blue-grey in the crouching figures and pink and blue in the soldier, the yellow of the Magdalene finds its place. The Magdalene is strangely luminous, although she is tucked away behind the ladder.

In all the armour there is green, especially in the soldier in the pink tunic on the right. The wood of the crosses is greenish again for the good thief; brown for Christ; and brown and green for the bad thief. The good thief wears a greyish white loincloth; Christ's is white with touches of grey; and the good thief's is green.

The following, fourth part of the composition shows John in unrelieved red. His red is at the same distance from the pink in the crouching figures as the red in Longinus' cloak; where Longinus opens himself up, John shuts himself. John is unlike Longinus; the Magdalene is counter to Longinus.

John, as I said, is in red; Mary, at his side, wears a dark blue-grey dress, which turns to lilac below, and a dark grey-blue cloak, which looks light grey-blue where it catches the light, and a blackish grey veil. These colours are not to be interpreted as a chord or a harmony; they are juxtaposed.

The skin colours. The skins of the soldiers, brown and brownish-red, come close to the brown of the bay horse; they are very remote from the skin colour of Christ. The skin of Christ is pallid, yellow, blue (grey). The skin of the thieves, on the other hand, is yellowish, reddish; somewhere between that of the soldiers and that of Christ. There are parts of the good thief that come particularly close to the skin colours of Christ. The skin colour of the Magdalene is red, blue, white: it departs from that of Christ in the blue direction, whereas that of the thieves departs from it in the opposite, yellow direction. And so the skin colour of Christ is furthest removed from that of the soldiers and intermediate between that of the thieves and that of the Magdalene. The skin of the young woman on the right is like that of the Magdalene; but her flesh does not seem insubstantial but round and firm. Only the skin of Mary, on her neck and face, is like that of Christ.

The climax of the colour composition is formed by the skin and body of Christ, together with the white, grey-shadowed loincloth against the brown wood; the crouching figures in pink and blue; and the Magdalene, luminous in her yellow dress. The composition concludes, in colour terms, with the liberation as local colours of the same colours that tinge the browns and greys with which it starts out.

The landscape is blue and green. The lower sky is yellow, pink and blue; it is entirely blue only between the arms and clothing of the horsemen, then in a narrow strip above the crouching figures and in front of the soldier's knee. Two-thirds of the sky shares the colour of Mary's dress and veil, becoming denser towards the right. It is noticeable, too, that the sun and the area of the

sun contain yellow and red, as does the shoulder of the good thief beneath. Across the sun a round grey cloud steals like the shadow of the earth; in the sun, a healthy, luminous 'skin colour' gives way to pallor, even darkness.

I now come to the last painting, the

Altarpiece of The Carrying of the Cross
(Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels[22]

This third painting (fig. 35), on which I shall touch briefly in conclusion, displays yet another method of colour composition. The figure composition is built up in three zones: the central zone overlaps the others to left and right. I shall go straight to the colour.

The lowest zone. On the left is a brown slope, then two groups, soldier and thief, thief and soldier, with uncouth bodies and faces, but joined in almost brotherly closeness: two men stoutly urging the party onwards, two men heavy, bent and weary. Colour: the first soldier wears a tunic that is probably violet, but seems reddish in the darkness; his prisoner has a red loincloth, and his skin is also markedly reddish. The other thief wears a dark, probably blue loincloth, and his skin colour is yellowish; his soldier wears a probably green tunic and a red sash. The thief on the left, in red, raises his head to look up at the figure of *Caritas*, who walks behind St Veronica. On the lowest level, he beholds: he is the good thief.

The intermediate zone. The earth in this intermediate zone contains yellow, blue and red; overall, it looks ochreous, brownish, greenish. Veronica wears a black dress, with highlights in white and, on the left, also in yellow, which makes the adjacent parts look blue-black. Her veil is white, with grey shadows that grow lighter as it comes nearer to her napkin. The napkin itself is white, whiter than the veil. *Caritas*, behind Veronica, wears a green (or lilac) dress, and, visible next to the child above, a lilac wrap. She looks with emotion towards the helper who is lifting up the cross. On a higher level, she too beholds.

The foot of Christ's far leg is nearer to us than his other foot, so that he appears to have stumbled; his crown of thorns appears in front of his halo, as he looks out at us. Like Veronica, he wears a black (surely blue-black?) robe, and

[22] Altarpiece of *The Carrying of the Cross*, Brussels, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, canvas, 560 x 350 cm, 1636-1637.

over it he has a red cloak. This red is like the red in the loincloth of the good thief below; except that there are more light areas, in which the colour red is more clearly evident.

The first and second helpers who take the weight of the cross form a variant on the first soldier/thief group; but Veronica and Christ are not a variant on the second. The first helper, light-skinned, wears light grey breeches and a green cloth wrap; the second helper, darker-skinned, wears a brown garment, with some red in it, and a red cap of the same red as the sash of the soldier on the right below.

The central zone expands to left and right. On the left we see John in red and Mary in pale blue. Mary reaches out to clasp Christ's resplendent, thorn-crowned head, but her hands seem to droop and fail her. Beyond the mother of Christ is a soldier, with his shoulder directly above her head, who turns this way as if to look at us; but in fact he is looking at Christ, and prodding his shoulder with his spear. On the right we see another woman, in a dress shot with violet and pink and a white veil; she is accompanied by a child and another woman. She too is looking upward, but she looks higher than either the good thief or *Caritas*; what she beholds can only be Golgotha.

The upper zone. The captain sits on a bay horse: brown again, but with yellow and red in it, so that here the life-giving transformation begins, as applied to the skin colour of the first helper and the wood of the cross. The horseman's knee is redder still, and very near; his tunic is yellow; his cloak is red, the same red as the cap of the second helper and the sash of the lowermost soldier. Thus, red on the right is a common factor in all the sequences. The sky above this captain is already insubstantial, grey, light-filled; its form relates to that of the captain himself.

Two soldiers ride ahead, directly beyond the soldier who prods Christ's shoulder. They ride, changing direction slightly in relation to the captain, and at an angle to each other, thus making the bend still tighter. After three turns, rising to the left each time, the path straightens out, winds round a rock and continues higher; at which point the women at right and left interpose themselves. The dapple-grey ridden by one soldier has darker legs, but the colour of its rump is developed from that of Veronica's napkin. Their armour is greyer than that of the soldiers who escort the thieves, with luminous yellow and red highlights. On they ride beneath the ensign, which has ochre cloth on the left and grey on the right, and the pink and lilac cloth of the banner. This is the only pink in the painting, apart from the skin tones of the woman and child on the

right; the lilac is lighter than that of the same woman's garment. On they ride, the pair of them, beneath a weird, grey sky - some yellow breaks through on the left - and in front of the grey rock on the left; as if setting off into the morning light, as if transfigured.

An image of redemption, in which the *metamorphosis* does not fall on the persons but on the action: a procession to the hill of redemption, and towards redemption itself.

You have now seen three fundamentally different manners of colour composition: and each manner has been adopted for thematic reasons.

In the altarpiece of the *Deposition*, the colours were spatially arranged around a centre, relating to and separating from each other, operating in a single context with each other; the figure composition created an oblong and a path to accommodate the action of the Deposition from the Cross: an oblong in which Christ was still on the cross, and a path into which he was taken down, one static and one moving form.

In the altarpiece of *The Spear Thrust*, the colours and colour relationships were placed spatially in a sequence from left to right, with climaxes in Christ and the Magdalene and a conclusion in the John-and-Mary group, each valid in its own right within the overall context: the main action and the emotional reaction, forming the twin climaxes of the narrative, and then, after the emotion, a strong, decisive conclusion.

Finally, in the altarpiece of *The Carrying of the Cross*, the colours and the colour relations followed each other spatially in such a way that a general process of transition from brown to grey caused those that came after to seem changed, transfigured, in relation to those that came before: all based on the theme of a transformative progress into the light.

4. RAPHAEL'S EXPULSION OF HELIODORUS FROM THE TEMPLE AND RUBENS' MASSACRE OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, ANALYSES OF COMPOSITION[1]

THE EXPULSION OF HELIODORUS FROM THE TEMPLE BY RAPHAEL[2]

We have discussed in the last two lectures the work process of Raphael and Rubens. In this lecture, I would like then to compare between the two artists and discuss the importance of the composition in two narrative paintings made by them. I have chosen two specific paintings representing events, in which a miracle takes place. These are Raphael's *Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple* and Rubens' *Massacre of the Holy Innocents*.

'Now when the holy city was inhabited with all peace, and the laws were kept very well, because of the godliness of Onias the high priest, and his hatred of wickedness . . . one Simon of the tribe of Benjamin, who was made governor of the temple . . . gat him to Apollonius the son of Thraseas, who then was governor of Celosyria and Phenice, and told him that the treasury in Jerusalem was full of infinite sums of money . . . Now when Apollonius came to the king [Seleucus IV Philopator] and had shewed him of the money whereof he was told, the king chose out Heliodorus his treasurer, and sent him with a commandment to bring him the foresaid money . . .

---

[1] Translated from the German by David Britt.

[2] Translated from Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus. Beiträge zur Neubegründung einer Historischen Kompositionslehre* (Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, ed. Bandmann, Hubala, Schöne vol. 15). Berlin 1980, pp. 49 - 59.

'The high priest told him that there was such money laid up for the relief of widows and fatherless children . . . And that it was altogether impossible that such wrongs should be done unto them, that had committed it to the holiness of the place, and to the majesty and inviolable sanctity of the temple, honoured over all the world. But Heliodorus, because of the king's commandment given him, said, That in any wise it must be brought into the king's treasury . . .

'The priests, prostrating themselves before the Altar in their priests' vestments, called unto heaven upon him that made a law concerning things given to be kept, that they should safely be preserved for such as had committed them to be kept. Then who so had looked the high priest in the face, it would have wounded his heart: for his countenance and the changing of his colour declared the agony of his mind. For the man was so compassed with fear and trembling of the body, that it was manifest to them that looked upon him, what sorrow he had now knot his heart. Others ran flocking out of their houses to make general supplication, because the place was like to come into contempt. And the women, girt with sackcloth under their breasts. abounded in the streets, and the virgins that were kept in ran, some to the gates, and some to the walls, and others looked out of the windows. And all, holding their hands toward heaven, made supplication. Then it would have pitied a man to see the falling down of the multitudes of all sorts, and the fear of the high priest, being in such an agony.

'They then called upon the Almighty Lord to keep the things committed of trust safe and sure for those that had committed them. Nevertheless Heliodorus executed that which was decreed. Now as he was there present himself with his guard about the treasury, the Lord of spirits, and the Prince of all power, caused a great apparition, so that all that presumed to come in with him were astonished at the power of God, and fainted, and were sore afraid. For there appeared unto them a horse with a terrible rider upon him, and adorned with a very fair covering, and he ran fiercely, and smote at Heliodorus with his forefeet, and it seemed that he who sat upon the horse had complete harness of gold. Moreover two other young men appeared before him, notable in strength, excellent in beauty, and comely in apparel, who stood by him on either side, and scourged him continually, and gave him many sore stripes.

'And Heliodorus fell suddenly unto the ground, and was compassed with great darkness; but they that were with him took him up, and put him into a litter. Thus him, that lately came with a great train and with all his guard into

the said treasury, they carried out, being unable to help himself with his weapons: and manifestly they acknowledged the power of God.

'For he by the hand of God was cast down, and lay speechless without all hope of life. But they praised the Lord, that had miraculously honoured his own place: for the temple, which a little afore was full of fear and trouble, when the Almighty Lord appeared, was filled with joy and gladness.' (Second Book of Maccabees, 3.1-30.)

Psalm 9.3: 'When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.'

'Alleluia, alleluia. Turning my steps to thy holy temple, I worship and praise thy name. Alleluia. The house of the lord is well founded on a firm rock. Alleluia.' (Gradual for the festival of the consecration of a church.)

Raphael's fresco of *The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple* (4,53 x 8,08 m) (fig. 36) occupies one wall of the room named after it, the *Stanza d'Eliodoro*, in the Vatican; it was painted in 1512-14. The composition is divided into three parts:

- The First Section consists of the Papal Group and the Large Group of women and girls, with a crowd behind; this section occupies the left foreground, spatially in front of the architecture that rises out of the pictorial field.
- The Second Section consists of the group of youths climbing a column, together with the priests leaning against a pier, the figure of the High Priest kneeling before the Altar, the Altar itself, the seven-branched lamp or *Menorah*, and the Ark of the Covenant, together with other figures praying behind. All this is at the centre; its elements consist of architecture and human figures placed in relation to it.
- The Third Section consists of the final group of the horseman, his companions, and Heliodorus together with the latter's bodyguards, with men carrying off Temple treasures in the background. Once more all this is spatially in front of the rising architectural elements.

Compositionally, the work can be categorised as dynamic; and, indeed, the dynamic contrasts within it are remarkable. Raphael has enormously intensified them in the progression from the First Section on the left to the Third Section on the right, but also within the First Section between the Papal Group and the Large Group of women and girls. He has reinforced the contrasts progres-

sively, setting one group against another to create a powerful alternation of dramatic crises that culminate in the memorably sudden but structurally quite logical apparition of the final group which contains the horseman.

I shall now summarise the composition, in sequence, with special reference to the intrinsic element of surprise.

I The First Section of the Composition

The single figure of the secretary for petitions. The Papal Group, and with it the First Section - and thus the whole composition, with its message of the miraculous answer to the prayer of the High Priest Onias - begins with the single figure of a Papal secretary for petitions; in right profile, his left arm and hand laid on his breast, his right arm swinging forward as he walks, he makes his entrance with his *biretta* and a written petition in his right hand.

This single figure is also a part of the Papal Group around and above him.

With the secretary to his right, Pope Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere) enters in the *sedia gestatoria*, carried aloft by four bearers. The first of these, feet set solidly apart, holds his *biretta* against his knee in his free right hand, clasps the carrying pole firmly in his left, and looks straight out of the picture. The second, less erect, holding the pole on his shoulder in his right hand, is also looking out at us; so is the third, who twists his head round towards his shoulder. Above them sits the Pope in majesty; his arms and hands rest squarely on the arms of his throne, and his head is turned slightly towards the far shoulder. He gazes inwards, into the depths of the space, as keenly as his bearers gaze outwards. He is gazing upon the High Priest of the Old Dispensation, as if to stand by him in his hour of need.

The secretary who walks on the Pope's near side is balanced on the far side by a woman of the congregation; both are seen in profile, and both are looking towards the right. Between them are bearers, who both look one way, and the Pope, who looks the other way. The group as a whole is dominated by the Pope; it looms up, stable as a pyramid. Such is its unforced dignity, power and seriousness that it seems immovably secure.

Now the Large Group of women and girls, consisting of the single figure of the kneeling woman in front, the group of two kneeling mothers with their children, and finally the row of three girls. After the solemn entry of the Pope, firm, secure, like a tower in the midst of his attendants, comes a group that is all fear and trembling, all agitated peering and pointing; a group that relates not to the High Priest, as the Pope does, but to a miracle.

The single figure of the woman at the front. She is down on her knees, the left one slightly forward, facing diagonally towards the rear of the space; her shawl billows as she abruptly swings round to her left, raising her left elbow and her right shoulder as if toward off the sight that she sees with open-mouthed terror; she has turned, shielding the women to her left with the sweeping curve of her body and her dress, at the same time extending her hands in a warning gesture, as if to hold back the women, the children, and the approaching Pope from the path of the advancing apparition.

The group of the two women who kneel side by side with their children. Shielded by the woman who kneels, there are two mothers and two children who huddle together. The woman further away from us, kneeling to pray, bowing forward towards our left, raises her chin, her mouth, her eyes, her whole face from her prayer and looks back over her shoulder towards what is happening far over to the right. The nearer of the two, seen in right profile, kneeling with her weight on her left knee, clasps a pair of baby boys, the nearer of whom bends down over his mother's right knee, holds his brother's arm, and peers timorously past him; the other boy cranes his head to follow what descends from the heights on the right of the picture. The mother, her shoulders protectively bowed over her children, peers round and away from us to see what is so exciting the girls.

The row of three girls. The girl on the right, who is the furthest from us, is taking a big stride back to the left, hunching her back and shoulders into a self-protective curve, taking refuge with the other two. She peeps out of the corner of her eye, dumb with fright. The second girl, open and receptive to what is happening, stretches out her open hand towards it as she leans back, marvelling. The third of the girls seems to push forward towards what is happening; her dress blows back as she nestles against the others and points with a limp arm. The sequence of their three heads and faces, their postures and gestures, is a sequence of psychological reactions, shrinking away from what they see and yet drawn back towards it.

This pattern of terrified retreat, detached showing, and forward pointing is matched by the psychological reactions of the three women, from the alarm that causes the one in the foreground to twist round, through the prayerfulness of the one in the middle, to the mother's gesture of craning round and forward.

And the three directions in which three successive figures are looking - the little boy who looks up, the second woman, and the girl with the outstretched hand - trace the path that the vision has taken in its instantaneous descent from heaven to earth.

The girl and woman who start away from the vision form an outer curve which encloses the whole Large Group of women and children and shields it from what is happening; only the billowing shawl of the single kneeling figure, and the outstretched arm of the second girl, break through the closed form. In an inner curve, the kneeling figure rounds off the central group of women and children. An innermost circle is formed by the shoulders of the women, the kneeling figure's left arm, and the mother's right arm. This sets up circling ripples and vortices of excitement, with prayer and mother-love at their centre, into which the spiralling movement breaks, and out of which the mother's head emerges to lead us on to the reactions of the girls. Compressed, tight-packed, alive, this is the collective reaction to a miracle.

II The Second Section of the Composition

The First Section of the composition begins with the entry of the Pope, firm, towering, and secure. Then it becomes animated, bending and stooping, cowering in terror, fleeing and straining, in the Large Group of women and girls. The Large Group itself is full of contrasts of rhythm and dynamics; and the whole First Section is thus made up of disparate elements. In utter contrast, the Second Section is an arrangement of multiple elements in series.

The group of the young men climbing onto the pillar. The vision, which is the cause of all the excitement that has overcome the women and the girls, is not pointed to or indicated by anyone elsewhere in the composition. The excitement is still there, and indeed the tension mounts; but all the figures are pursuing Pope Julius' interest in what is happening far back in the space. In the

process, the quiet sense of expectation which he conveys is translated into sweeping curves of movement.

A young man rests the knee of his free left leg against - and supports himself on his right knee on - the cornice of the pedestal of an engaged column. He stretches up, garment billowing, to his right, clasping a companion round his waist and hips, looking up at him, trying to steady himself and pull himself up. The companion, further to the right, gains a toehold on the cornice with his right foot and advances his left foot onto the plinth of the half-column itself. He stands, leaning forward, his left arm round the column, clasping the pier with his right, and looks down across his right shoulder.

Both youths are involved with the architecture; both are living forms, and yet they are akin to the architecture. The quadrant formed by the figure who climbs is repeated on the left in a glimpse of the vault of a side-aisle, and the standing figure curls himself into a curve which echoes that of the column he grasps.

The group of two priests leaning against the pier. After the towering stability of the Papal Group, and the swirling, sinuous animation of the Large Group, the Second Section brings first the upward scramble of the youths, and then, back to earth again, a supported standing posture. Two figures again; this time deep in conversation. The first, in profile, leans the base of his spine against the pedestal and inclines the upper part of his body, his neck and his head, forwards. His arms are tightly folded, his hands high on his upper arms, as he turns his face away from us, with a look of deep concern, to gaze into his neighbour's eyes. The second figure leans the base of his spine against a pier, draws his shawl round his arms and across his chest in a sweeping curve, and turns his head, with a look of indignation, his cowl against his cheek, to face his neighbour. Their dialogue embodies reactions of concern, indignation, leaning forward, twisting round, after years of tranquil and undisturbed attendance at the Temple.

The group containing the High Priest, the Altar, the *Menorah*. The sense of expectation aroused by the silent entrance of Julius II, intensified by the agitation of the women and girls, and raised to fever pitch by the two young men, has been held in suspense and finely tuned by the patient concern and the controlled indignation of the two priests; it is now finally resolved.

Calmly observed by Pope Julius, watched in perturbation by the two youths, the High Priest kneels before the Altar, head raised and hands joined in prayer. The petition in the secretary's hand (in the Papal Group), the hands of

the stooping woman, upraised in prayer (in the Large Group of women and girls), the praying hands of the old man in the crowd (glimpsed between the priests, beyond the curtain), and the hands of the High Priest, all lie on one straight line: it runs from petition to humble prayer, then to anguished prayer, then to tranquil, unharassed, confiding prayer.

To the right of the figure of the High Priest stands the Altar. On the Altar, whose altarcloth hangs down, repeating the curve of the High Priest's arm, there lies the *Torah* roll; and on one horn of the Altar lies the censer. To the right of the Altar stands the *Menorah*, whose seven arms, repeating six times over the curve of the arms of the priest at prayer, bear the lamps that burn before Yahweh: 'Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.' (Psalm 141.2.) This is the centre of the composition, framed by symmetrical architecture.

Now comes the Crucial Surprise.

Up to this point there has been an alternation of movement and repose: in the First Section the Papal Group was tranquil, the Large Group of women agitated; then, reversing the order, the group of climbing youths was agitated, the group of standing priests against the column was tranquil; the High Priest too knelt in tranquillity, and the same tranquillity emanates from the Altar and the *Menorah* themselves, in the centre of the composition.

But now, instead of a renewal of movement, there are no priests, no young men either. The whole complex of rhythmic and dynamic contrasts between standing, stooping, clambering, leaning, praying figures; the unity of the crowd and the priests, together in their hour of need; all this is interrupted and shattered. On a stone pedestal stand upright brackets in the form of volutes; the volutes raise aloft the stone Ark of the Covenant; on the Ark lie the golden Cherubim; and on stone piers and columns the arcades and domes rest their gilded weight, glowing in the subdued light. This is the Ark and the Temple of Yahweh. 'Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east . . . and the earth shined with his glory . . . And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is towards the east . . . and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.' (Ezekiel 43.1- 5.)

The curve of the High Priest's arms, open towards the top, is repeated in the drape of the altarcloth, and is then reiterated six times over in the upward branching arms of the *Menorah*. Then, abruptly, it is turned sideways in the upright, leftward-facing curves of the volutes; it is set vibrating in the wings of the Cherubim; it is transformed into an overhead vault in the six gilded arches

which advance from the depths of the space, tight-packed and firm, to bear the gilded domes and tinge the High Priest with their reflected glow as he kneels in prayer The arches and the domes together respond and correspond to the prayer that is offered up.

The Crucial Surprise is this: in the *Menorah*, and the elements that follow it, the context of the actions and emotions of the human figures is not maintained but visually and thematically shattered, and against all expectations there is a sudden visible and structural presence of that which the High Priest is addressing: the Ark and Temple of Yahweh. 'I will worship towards thy holy temple and praise thy name.' (Psalm 138.2.) Architecturally present, rock-solid, built on sound foundations, 'the house of the Lord is well founded on a firm rock.' It is a place of light, for 'the glory of the Lord filled the house' (Ezekiel 43.5).

III The Third Section of the Composition

FIRST: Up to this point there has been a succession of rhythmically and dynamically contrasted *states*:

- static and tower-like, in the Papal Group; twisting, stooping, crouching, reaching, fleeing, in the Large Group of women and girls in the First Section of the composition;
- clambering, in the group of the two youths; firmly planted on the ground and supported from behind, in the group of the two priests; kneeling at rest and directing prayer upwards, in the solitary figure of the High Priest, and in other figures, in the Second Section of the composition.

Section by Section, group by group, a sequence of rhythmic and dynamic *states* has been built up.

In abrupt contrast, the third section is not filled by disparate and discrete rhythmic and dynamic *states* but dominated by a single overwhelming rhythmic and dynamic *movement*, a sequence of figures and groups which extend each other and also absorb each other, combining to present the overwhelming thing that now happens.

The two flying youths form one figure, the first *extended figure*. The right leg and left arm of the nearer youth balance each other, above the down-

ward-pointing left leg, and the right arms of both youths, wielding their scourges, form another balanced pair, like double wings. The youths form a stable, autonomous figural unit; but they have a dynamic extension in that they, together with the horseman and his mount, make up a *group*, which advances in a succession of great undulating curves. One wave, the first, swells in the garment of the first youth, above his back foot; there is a double wave between his legs, a bigger one above his thigh, and sweeping curves swirl round his arm and back. A whirling formation under his chest turns out to form part of the horse's tail; there is an energetic curve in the horse's hind leg, a spray of wave-forms in the horseman's cloak, and an overarching curve in the horse's neck which threatens to topple like a huge sea wave. The group is dynamically extended yet again into a constellation that includes the youths, the horseman, and Heliodorus himself: wave follows wave, surging over the prostrate victim, who represents the only concave curve amid all these convex ones, arching his body like the re-entrant curve of a breaker, yielding with a cry, and - yet another extension of the group - lying close, angular, firmly lodged in front of his own guards and treasure-bearers, as if at the foot of a rocky scree.

SECOND: But within this overwhelming rhythmic and dynamic movement, within this constantly extending sequence of dynamic elements, the figures and groups of figures appear as autonomous entities. Not only, as described in the *extended figure* of the flying youths, with their balanced, upraised arms, but also:

The heavenly horseman and his horse form an artistically autonomous *group*. The rider, with his arm vigorously upraised, bears in his face a superhuman combination of impassiveness, in the mouth and chin, and fury, in the knitted brows and blazing eyes. He and his horse, which he has reined in tight so that it rears up, are stable, compact, powerful and contained.

Heliodorus, too, has been made into an artistically autonomous *single figure*. He is all submission, twisting round in his agony to look upwards. An amphora has fallen from his grasp, and the stolen gold spills out onto the ground.

Together with the two guards at the side - who bend forward and retreat to the side, grasping their weapons, crying out, groping for their shields - he constitutes another autonomous element, an *accompanied single figure*.

Another, larger autonomous group, artistically quite distinct from Heliodorus' guards, is formed by Heliodorus himself and the horseman. This is a representation of victory and defeat. The vanquished cries out as he looks up

and beholds his fate; the victor adopts a powerful, menacing posture but does not lay a finger on his defeated adversary, touches not a hair of his head, nor does he suffer his horse's hoof to touch him, but leaves Heliodorus as unscathed as another St Paul. See the Second Book of Maccabees, 3.33 onwards: "'Give Onias the high priest great thanks, insomuch as for his sake the Lord hath granted thee life: And seeing that thou hast been scourged from heaven, declare unto all men the mighty power of God." . . . So Heliodorus, after he had offered sacrifice unto the Lord . . . testified . . . to all men the works of the great God, which he had seen with his eyes.'

The configuration of the Third Section of the composition as a whole contains an antithesis; it embodies a rhythmic and dynamic movement which on the one hand expands dynamically to absorb the groups in succession - the *expanded figure* constituted by the youths; the *group* of the youths and the horseman; the *constellation* of the youths, the horseman and Heliodorus - and on the other hand works in the opposite direction to separate into successive, autonomous, free-standing entities first the *group* of the man on the horse, then the *group* of the horseman and Heliodorus, then the *single figure* of Heliodorus himself. On one hand the thematic content is as follows: in the horse-and-rider group, the glory of a celestial being; in the group of the horseman and Heliodorus, victory and defeat; in the single figure of Heliodorus, conscious, open-eyed submission. On the other hand, the expanding dynamic succession of figures and groups has a thematic content of its own, which is the process of Heliodorus' downfall.

THIRD: Both rhythmic-dynamic movements - the one that encompasses the successive figures and groups and the one that makes them autonomous - take their motive power from the action of the celestial visitants. Their dizzying swoop to earth, their pulling back to an upright posture as they land, their swirling movement, constitute the process by which the overthrow of Heliodorus is accomplished, standing out bright, clear and spacious against a tightly packed dark background. Conversely, at one and the same time the glory of the horseman is made manifest; victory and defeat are firmly established, as in a monument; and there is a clear statement of conscious submission.

The configuration is so much of a piece that the figures and groups work autonomously and yet coexist, interact, include each other in a constantly shifting web of contextual relationships. Every component of the configuration, and every relationship within it, constitutes a figure in its own right: an autonomous, visible, fully worked out meaning. This wealth of significant figurative

content means that this configuration not only differs from the Papal Group and the Large Group of women and girls but transcends them - as it does the group of clambering youths, that of the priests leaning against the pier, the figures of the High Priest, the Altar, the *Menorah*, the architectural *metamorphosis*. It transcends all these in its unexpected plenitude of life, its sheer multifariousness, and its radiant power. It is consistent, significant, spiritually animated, to the utmost degree.

Burckhardt said of it in his *Cicerone*: '[Raphael] never created a more magnificent group of animated figures.'[3]

The theme of the composition as a whole is manifest in what I have called the Crucial Surprise, and in the configuration on the right.

Arching and bending: the woman who kneels in front of the other women twists round in fright; one of the girls bends low in her eagerness to escape; the youths arch their bodies in their eagerness to see. The arched shape appears in tranquil guise in the collar of the indignant priest, in the arms of the High Priest as he prays, and in the drape of the altarcloth. Upturned and repeated, it reappears in the *Menorah*. Then follows the Crucial Surprise: the succession of human actions and human emotions is broken; and there before us, present and clear to see, is what the High Priest himself is addressing, the Ark and Temple of Yahweh, the House of God. In these the curves undergo a *metamorphosis*: upright in the volutes, sweeping in the wings of the Cherubim, and enlarged in the repeated, overarching vault of the Temple roof. And here is the miracle! it is through an overwhelming dynamic sequence of just such curves and arches that the sinner is overcome, the glory of the horseman shines forth, and victory and defeat are made manifest in the conscious submission of the vanquished. The horseman who overcomes Heliodorus has descended from the vault. Victory and defeat, the glory of the horseman, Heliodorus' conscious submission and the overthrow of the sinner, all derive from the Temple.

The woman who kneels in front and sees all this raises her hands in terror: she raises them as a sign to the women and children, to the one who flees, the one who prays, the one who shields her children. Her gesture means that there is no need for any of this activity. She raises them to convey the same message to Pope Julius as he enters: there is no need of his assistance. Something is happening: a miracle is bearing down on them. The sanctity of the place

---

[3] Jacob Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone. Eine Anleitung zum Genuß der Kunstwerke Italiens,* Basle [2]1860, p. 919.

asserts itself, the inviolability of the Temple is made manifest, the High Priest's prayer is answered, the house of God is glorified. 'How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God . . .' (Genesis 28.17; introit of the feast of the Consecration.) And in the Second Book of Maccabees, 3.37-38, Heliodorus tells the king: 'If thou hast any enemy or traitor, send him thither, and thou shalt receive him well scourged, if he escape with his life: for in that place, no doubt, there is an especial power of God. For he that dwelleth in heaven hath his eye on that place, and defendeth it; and he beateth and destroyeth them that come to hurt it.'

The horror and terror, the bending and twisting, the flight and the straining, of the women and girls in the First Section serve to build up the tension; the sequence of groups precipitates it, the Crucial Surprise adds a further twist, all to the same end. The composition of the *Expulsion of Heliodorus* may rightly be called dramatic. Burckhardt says of it, once more in the *Cicerone*: 'With indescribable power and splendour, Raphael makes his entrance into the field of dramatic painting.'[4]

Spontaneity as a compositional principle finds an especial fulfilment when it serves to show an unforeseen event, a miracle: the miracle that the continuum of human activity and human emotion is broken and the Temple asserts its power, and that a heavenly apparition can appear as if from nowhere, and can grow and spread autonomously within a configuration, defying all continuity.

[4] Jacob Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone. Eine Anleitung zum Genuß der Kunstwerke Italiens*, Basle [2]1860, p. 918.

THE MASSACRE OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS BY RUBENS[5]

The *Massacre of the Holy Innocents* (1,99 x 3,02 m) (fig. 37), by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, is a late work, painted on an oak panel entirely by the artist himself, around l635-l639. It is one of those medium-sized, multi-figure compositions - like the *Battle of the Amazons* in the same museum, painted about twenty years earlier - in which, more than in the larger works, Rubens' art of composition is displayed in all its wealth of variety. In the High Renaissance, Raphael and Michelangelo had painted their most complex compositions (which served as Rubens' models) in the fresco technique, as a component of monumental art; by contrast, these works by Rubens were not directed at the public at large but done for the pleasure of the connoisseur.

The *Massacre of the Holy Innocents* is one of those compositions that are arranged in multiple complexes with an intervening linear configuration. In this it follows the example of Michelangelo's representation of the Deluge (fig. 2). In my account of this composition I shall pay especial attention to the positioning of the transforming element of surprise that is present here as it is in Raphael's *Expulsion of Heliodorus* (fig. 36).

Raphael places it classically, immediately after the climax of the composition, to give depth; but in Rubens it appears, unclassically, baroquely, spiralling and culminating, as a superadded final element, a *coda* to the composition.

---

[5] Translated from Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus. Beiträge zur Neubegründung einer Historischen Kompositionslehre* (Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, ed. Bandmann, Hubala, Schöne Bd. 15). Berlin 1980, pp. 158 - 169.

The composition - to leave aside for a moment the middle and background, as well as the angelic figures in the sky - is divided into three principal sections by two *caesuras*:

- a centralised figure complex on the left, consisting of twelve figures, assassins, children, mothers and a dog;
- - a looser-seeming complex on the right, again consisting of twelve figures, mothers, soldiers, children;
- - and a diagonal line - interrupted, displaced sideways to a parallel course, the resumed - of five mothers and children, four soldiers, and seven assassins and children. The line begins in the centre of the picture and passes above and behind the right-hand complex to end behind the square truncated pier on which Herod's edict of death is posted; its last two figures are those of two local elders, presiding over a mound of dead children.

To take the three sections in order:

I The Complex on the Left

First, in a shirt, flung on the ground, head and arms first, belly and legs bare and turned towards us, there lies a little boy. This introduces a first thematic element: the death of a boy. Then, tail waving, a dog slinks over the corpse to lap blood from the ground. This introduces a second thematic element: the thirst for blood.

And, as the dog slinks over the corpse, an assassin springs up, raising his right leg and arm, lifts a boy from his companion's shoulder and plunges his sword with relish into the child's breast. And the three elements, one above the other - the dead boy, the dog's thirst for blood, the assassin's bloodlust - establish that the theme is to be that of child-slaughter.

Further right: just as the dog crouches over the corpse to lick the blood, a woman crouches on hands and knees to shield her dead child, to make a space for him with arms that can no longer cradle him and hands that can no longer clasp, in blind, speechless misery, her hair flowing loose. Over her stands an assassin, supported by a strong right leg that is set down at her side; the toes of his left foot rest on the base of her spine, so that he kneels on the back of his prostrate victim, his knee between her shoulderblades, turned frontally in the pose of a victor. His right arm clasps the little boy who lies across his shoulder, arms and legs flailing, and whom his companion has grasped by the hair to kill

him. The second assassin draws in his left side in pain, turns and lifts his head in fear and agony; out of the corner of one eye he sees what is being done to him by two furious women. But still he firmly grips the shirt of a second boy, whom he is snatching from his mother. Here, after the initial thematic exposition - death of boy, dog's thirst for blood, bloodlust of the assassin - we find at the centre of the complex the oppressed mother's pathetic attempt to protect her child, and the victor who, in spite of his pain, remains victorious. With them are the boy-children who have been snatched from their mothers to be killed.

Further still to the right, two dead children: one lies on his side with his back to us and his face and breast pressed to the ground; the other, flung down on top of the first child, lies on his back with one leg and a bent arm in the air; his other arm, and his head - with his mouth still open in a last scream - hang down across the first boy's back.

Above these are two mothers. One stoops to hold on to the child whom the assassin has by the shirt; she passes her arm under one leg to grasp the other. The boy's head hangs back, his right arm is limply raised, and his left hand scrabbles unavailingly at the fist of his assassin. With breast and shoulder bare, she bends over the child, stretches her head forward in blind fury on this side of the assassin's arm, and reaches out on the far side of his arm to sink her talons in his side like a lioness; she has a solid physical presence. Further back, the other woman plunges as if through the flowing waves of her garments and her hair, like a Fury; hatred, vengeance and death are written on her features, and she stitches out both arms to tear at the assassin's cheek and temple with all ten fingernails. Both women are rounding on the killer in his moment of triumph: one tries to snatch her child back, and the other, too late to save her own child, craves revenge. Behind this second woman the fathers are to be seen returning from the fields, shaking their fists in unavailing rage and grief: too late.

The figures' hands, their clawing fingers, the angles of elbows, knees, legs, arms, the limbs of children that seem as if wrenched from their twisted little bodies, are vividly emphasised. The scene is one of grasping, stabbing, weapons, murder, and children dying.

This complex of figures has a bottom layer, narrow and close to the ground, in which the deads are crammed together with the blood-licking dog and the mother who shields her dead. Above, straining against and through each other, are the tangled bodies of the actors and those who are acted upon. Murder and bloodlust press outward and to the right; the protective and vengeful impulses tend leftward and inward. Both flank the standing assassin who snatches

his victim in triumph despite the pain inflicted on him by the women he oppresses.

II The Diagonal

The whole mass of the left-hand complex of figures and figure groups, on the left, sinks away towards the right, and then the row of mothers sets up an ascending movement. Between the Lioness, the Fury and the dead children, there steps out a figure that represents nothing but lamentation.

St Matthew 2.l6 onwards: 'Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 'In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.'

The Gospel quotes here from Jeremiah 31.15.

The first figure in the line of mothers is Rachel, richly dressed as befits the wife of the wealthy Jacob. She advances her left foot and her rock-solid left leg towards our right, stretches up her arms, throws her head back, and arches backward.

Her outer garment, its skirt caught up over her forward leg, falls open to the waist, and with her shift unfastened and her sleeves loose she bares her breast, neck, face and forearms to the sky, leaning back, weeping, lamenting, with bloodstained swaddling clothes in her hands: mourning, because her children are not.

The second figure in the line of mothers is flanked by a companion. A woman is walking, climbing a flight of steps, her left foot on the first step, lifting her right foot off the ground. She is clasped round the waist from behind, in a limp but heavy embrace, by another woman who mourns, with head on one side and eyes turned heavenward, and pulls her back to beg her to help; but she has her arms round her own dead child, which lies with its arms resting on hers, its legs dangling, and its head lolling against the fingers of her left hand. She tries to clasp its shoulder, to stroke its cheek; she clings to it and kisses it dementedly as she carries it up towards the place of slaughter.

The third figure in the line, and the fourth in the group, stands one step higher; she repeats the posture of the third except that she is reaching forward as she climbs, looking up and holding out her arms as if in joy; she stretches out her hands, fingers fluttering, to the assassin who is bearing off her two children.

In the complex on the left, mothers and assassins are shown together; here they are separated into two successive lines of figures, and a soldier thrusts his spear between them to hold them apart.

The left-hand complex has a deep band of figures above a less deep one: one level for those who act and one level for the dead. Here, in the centre of the picture, a deep band appears below a less deep one: the mothers below the soldiers.

As the line of four mothers moves up the steps, the four soldiers who are there to stand guard begin to move down. The women turn their backs on what happens below and look up imploringly; the soldiers turn their backs on what happens above and descend, wielding their spears. Both rows are closely packed, bunched together at waist-height; the arms of one group and the weapons of the other spread out above. The women, stretching, embracing, climbing, are characterised by soft, sweeping curves; the soldiers have hard, angular crossbelts and bent arms; edgy, jutting movements in full-face and profile; massive round helmets and shoulder and elbow armour; they are hard, angular, strong, destructive.

The soldiers and the women are linked in two ways. The second soldier from the top leans forward to thrust his spear in between the assassins and the women; this serves both to divide the women from the assassins and to separate them from their children. And Rachel stretches and arches back, raises her empty swaddling clothes towards the upraised spear of the fourth soldier, lifts her hand to the tassel on the spear, as if imploring heaven to send a just spear to espouse her cause. The spear, however, thrusts past her hand; it is aimed at the back of the mother in the first group who is assailing an assassin like a Fury. It is meant to kill her.

The soldiers, viewed as a whole, are striding forth to the attack. The soldier at the top, his head and helmet seen in profile, stands with arm raised and elbow bent, firmly grasping his spear, which is propped on the step; he is watching attentively. In front of him, the second soldier has leaned forward from a similar posture to grip his spear in both hands and thrust it in between the assassins and the women. The third stands upright, rather as if he had just straightened up from the same stooping posture. He is seen frontally, having

side-stepped down one step, and has grasped his spear in the middle and near the tip, swinging his shoulders and elbows round in an angular, forceful gesture, to set it upright. His head, turned towards his right shoulder is shown in profile; he looks down intently, as does the first soldier who looks past him. The fourth soldier, one step lower again, appears in profile, as if he had just turned to look the other way, and has raised his spear, grasping the lower end in his right hand for the thrust, guiding it home with the left.

The configuration of the group of descending soldiers, with its succession of watching, separating and taking aim, and its angular breaks, is accompanied by an array of spears pointing in different directions: those of the first and second soldiers, held parallel, are leaning slightly backwards, creating a space and a framework for the two men's attentive watching. Another spear, held at a shallower angle, appears between them. The spears of two more unseen soldiers appear above the heads of the third and fourth man, once more parallel to each other, but now inclined diagonally forward; between them appears another, pointed slightly lower; and the last points downward, ready for the thrust.

In the complex on the left, no soldiers are involved in the action. In the complex on the right they are very definitely involved. Here in the centre they accomplish the move from detached supervision to direct intervention. The second soldier intervenes to separate; but he separates a mother from her child. The fourth intervenes to fight; but he kills a mother.

The theme on the left is that of children, successively dead, dying, stolen, snatched; of bloodlust and butchery; of ignoble assassins who triumph over the oppressed; and finally of mothers who assail the victorious assassins like lionesses, like the Furies themselves. Seeing this, the soldiers intervene; for this is rebellion. Drawn by Rachel's fluttering swaddling-bands and by the soldier's poised lance, the fathers dash to the rescue, with rocks in their upraised hands; this too is rebellion. Farther back in the landscape horsemen are chasing fathers and mothers with children, and farther back still a reserve column stands at the ready.

Giotto had been the first artist to distinguish between the base executants of Herod's edict, the assassins themselves, and the escorting soldiers who react with horror and avert their gaze: they are there to guard the assassins, not to intervene[6]. Rubens does not spare us the next turn of the screw, the next degree of official cynicism; he has the soldiers actually joining in the slaughter

[6] Giotto, *The Massacre of the Holy Innocents*, Padua, Cappella degli Scrovegni.

that the assassins have set in train. He makes this development explicit in the movement of the intervening soldiers themselves, opposite and parallel to that of the lamenting women.

The line of women, tightly packed together as if a rope were tied round their waists, is prolonged by a looser line of assassins. The first woman bends backwards; the third climbs and reaches out to the right; the one in the middle, flanked by her child on the right and her companion on the left, is in a firmly closed pose. They are all marked by curves, both simple and S-shaped, with an added elaboration of form and expression in the faces and hands. Each is unique. Rachel is all lamentation; the mother in the middle has her child and her companion; the last raises her eyes, her arms, and her hands towards the assassin, hoping against hope. The conceptual order of the motifs is once more reversed: the third in the line reaches out to her still-living children, the second clasps a dead child, and Rachel is the embodiment of Jeremiah's words: 'because they are not': she holds no child, living or dead, but only empty garments.

From the immediacy of Rachel's lament, by way of the second mother's hugging and kissing of her dead child, Rubens leads the action up to the forlorn hope, the defensive, imploring gesture, of the third, and across the *caesura* straight to the heart of what is happening to the living creatures who are in the assassins clutches. The mother reaches out, the soldier interposes, the assassin - genuinely - pauses. The mother reaches across the barrier of the spear, stitching out her left hand to make her appeal to the soldier as a defender and her right hand to make her appeal to the assassin as a father; but the latter has no paternal feelings, only the urge to kill, and glowers at her darkly. He is darting up the steps, crouching, in haste; one child's head, arms and shoulders dangle pathetically over his right arm, the other child has been slung bottom-upwards over his shoulder. He alone is stablely positioned; his body, in a running posture, is in profile, but his head is turned full-face. He alone has a square of space to himself, beyond the spear, beside and behind the soldier and behind the back of the next assassin, a space to pause with a menacing backward glare: he is delaying the pursuit.

But then there is the next assassin. Solidly built, he is bending backwards, his knee against the pedestal of the truncated pier, holding a child by both legs and taking a wide backswing with it over his left shoulder. He looks out of the corner of his eye at the mother, who lifts her arms in despair out of the *mêlée* at the right.

A third assassin is to be seen further behind the truncated pier. He faces forward, out of the picture, as he grasps a little boy by his arms and legs and takes a downwards and sideways swing to dash the child against the pier. Farther right again, the truncated pier itself looms up with Herod's decree on its near flank; and further right again, the local elders sit, with brows bent and chins tucked in, deep in thought. Shielded by the pier and by the edict, they preside over a pile of corpses.

III The Figure Complex on the Right

In each of the three sectors of the composition the total of mothers and children is nine. The proportion of children diminishes towards the right: six in the first group, five in the second, and four in the third. The number of mothers correspondingly increases from three to four to five.

In the first part, on the left, all the children were dead, or snatched away, or suffering death, or being caught by a garment. The mothers, for their part, were prostrate, or they were attacking the assassins; in the latter case a revolt was in progress.

In the central, second part of the composition the mothers were climbing the steps, lamenting, half-insensible, or hoping against hope, but still themselves uninjured. But the soldiers were advancing down the steps to intervene, because of the revolt below; and the lowest member of the party was holding his spear ready to kill.

In the third part the soldiers too have become involved in hand-to-hand fighting, and the mothers are struggling, or wounded, or under threat of death, in defence of their offspring.

The first group in the right foreground consists of four figures: a woman, who has sunk backwards from a squatting position, has her weight on her left leg, which is bent under her, and is levering herself up with her bent left arm; she stretches out her right leg, its foot bare, to balance herself and support her child. Her left hand flat on the ground, she props herself on her forearm, pushing herself up and forward with her upper arm and shoulder. Shoulder and breast are bare; shoulder and head are swathed in a cascade of hair. Her knees crossed, her head back, she looks upwards and back into the space with a scream of terror, and her hand grips the blade of the dagger that threatens her child. Her little son lies on her leg and knee; he has sunk back to the left as she

has to the right; one leg is in her lap, pushing against her breast, and one arm dangles; the other arm is drawn back above his head. The boy is naked, ready for the knife, and screams in the firm grasp, which holds him by the shoulder. A soldier has come upon the mother from behind and bends over her, in a pose echoed by the forms of his own tunic and scabbard, as her head drops back against his knee. He stretches out one arm, beneath her arm and across the child's leg, to grasp him below the shoulder. He lifts his right arm, thrusts with the forearm and drives the dagger down, parallel to its scabbard, towards the child; the mother diverts the blade with a bleeding hand. An old woman, finally, her breasts bare, comes up behind the soldier, plants a foot behind his foot, which in turn is behind the mother's hand, and springs to the mother's aid: she plunges both hands in the soldier's hair, throwing herself backwards and to the side, her face as wild as her billowing garments, to drag him round and away. His features contorted with pain, he loses his concentration on the child.

In the first complex, on the left, there was a deep upper layer (fighting) above a lower layer (the dead); in the central diagonal there was a visually less deep band (the soldiers) above a deeper band (the mothers). In the complex on the right there is once more a deep *stratum* above a narrow band that is close to the ground. The collection of standing figures, which rise above and beyond this foreground group, is made up of two distinct groups with a single figure between them.

The left-hand group consists of four figures. Still upright, a woman is sinking back into a sitting position, her head flung back, fighting for breath, her right thumb and index finger grasping for a dagger which is drawing blood from her forearm, and her outstretched left hand holding on to the arm of her child as it slips away from her. At right angles to this figure, a soldier is stepping in between the woman and her second child, who is clinging to the leg of another mother and crying as he looks up. The soldier thrusts his knee in between the mother and the child, who symmetrically grasp each other's hands. His left arm clasps to his broad shoulder the writhing, screaming form of the child, head downwards, one little arm still in the mother's grasp, his fingers still gripping her thumb. Right shoulder to the fore, elbow jutting, the soldier brings the heel of his right hand down on her collarbone and compresses her throat with a twist of his wrist. Totally beyond compassion, totally beside himself, he waits for her collapse, her anguish, and her scream.

Rubens refines upon the cruelty of his assassins and soldiers as the action progresses; the assassin who pauses, and now this soldier, and the assassin

who swings the child back to dash him against the pier, are killers who look the mothers in the eye and wait for their screams: they want to see them break down. Rubens thus gives a further twist to the mere bloodlust of his first assassin, the one on the far left of the composition.

To the right of this group stands the single figure of a woman. In the first complex, on the left, the focus was on the victory and the pain of the assassin; in the central section the *arioso* lamentation of Rachel intensified the theme. In the third section, similarly, the intensest passion, the profoundest suffering, is concentrated in a figure who stands out above the rest.

A woman, seen from behind, supporting her weight on her right leg - he left, to which the other woman's child clings, is slightly bent - is reaching upwards, leaning back slightly; her left hand, grasping nothing but air, is in front of the assassin who holds her child; the right hand, not gripping, is in front of the pier, as if to hold the two apart. She sees the assassin bracing his knee against the pedestal and swinging her little son back, one leg in each hand, looking out of the corner of his eye for her reaction before dashing the child's brains out against the pier, which carries the edict. No longer hoping against hope, as the last figure in the central group could still do, she lifts herself up and stretches out her hands, like another Rachel, to grasp nothing and to separate nothing, only to topple over backwards.

The last group in this complex, on the extreme right, consists of three figures. A woman is sitting or squatting, with her arms on her child. She holds it across her knees, still in its swaddling bands, and bends forward to shield it, sinking her teeth in blind panic into the forearm of the ruffian who attacks her. This assassin, the only non-soldier in this third section of the composition, is crouching at her side and has reached out roughly to pull her arms away from the child. His face a mask of pain and rage, he lifts a dagger behind the mother's back, ready to plunge it into her.

In this complex the women are resisting and confronting the assassins and soldiers. In the left-hand complex the fight is on the ground; in the diagonal linear configuration its direction is upward and downward; here it is concentrated in the centre. In the first struggle the child has been saved for the moment, in the second it is lost. In the first group the mother is wounded; in the second she is wounded and falling to the ground; in the third she is on the point of death; and the cause of this wounding, this fall, this death, is about to be dashed to pieces before the eyes of the central figure as she raises up her hands in despair.

IV The Conclusion

The model for the composition of Rubens' *Massacre of the Holy Innocents*, the exemplar that Rubens followed and set out to emulate, was - as I have said - Michelangelo's fresco of *The Deluge* (fig. 2). In this work, if we leave aside the boat in the middle ground, the two-figure group of the father who saves his son, and the Ark in the background, the successive compositional elements are as follows:

- first a centralised complex of figures and groups representing those who have sought refuge from the Deluge by climbing the slope (twelve figures, including one animal: the same total as Rubens' first complex);
- then in the centre a descending (in Rubens an ascending) line of figures and groups, representing those who are still climbing the slope to take refuge;
- and finally, on the right, a complex of figures and groups which at first sight, (as with Rubens) seems less coherent, and which consists of those who have gathered on one last scrap of dry land.

A look at this chosen model will show how Rubens handled his schema, how he made it accommodate passionate emotion, swift action, and dramatic narration.

Rubens has caused his first complex, on the left, to slope downwards towards the centre of the picture: a trend which applies both to its mass as a whole and to its upper contour. He leads the beginning of the ascending line out of the first complex, between a group of adult figures (those that I have called the Lioness and the Fury) and the dead children, through the upward and backward curve of the lamenting Rachel. He bunches the ascending line of mothers together at the waist; he brings down a line of soldiers in the opposite direction, all sharp points and jutting angles; he introduces a pause into the action; he carries the line of climbing assassins far to the right and high up. He builds up the right-hand complex in successive layers to meet this ascending line, and indeed aims it directly at the line through the gesture of the woman who throws up her hands and catches the eye of the ruffian who is about to dash her son against the pier. He concentrates pain, misery, hope, fear, action and reaction around the pedestal of the truncated pier. One look suffices to see how Rubens transforms, bends, clusters, stretches his material to transmute Michelangelo's epic balance and unity of tone into a dramatic tension that surges up towards the upper right-hand corner, where stands the fateful pier with its murderous edict.

And that is where it all twists back on itself.

Behind the truncated pier, calm and firm, stands a building. There is a wall-pier, and next to it an arch which curves to the right, under which the elders sit, and a barrel-vaulted portico to the left: it is an 'ornate, gloomy-looking Doric structure' (Burckhardt[7]), its columns impassively marking the positions of the hesitant assassin, the fainting mother and Rachel, who herself is as firm as a pillar. It is majestic, durable, definitive, and stony. And then, abruptly, it introduces a second ending, a *coda*, to round off the whole composition while at the same time transforming it. On a curious-looking trellis, floating clear and weightless above the lamenting form of Rachel, there is green foliage; then the sky opens out, and there, twisting and tumbling in space above warmly lit ruins, a shattered column and a *martyrion* or memorial shrine, are tender, rosy angels, emerging from filmy clouds, complementing the light-filled greenery. They have come to answer Rachel's plea by scattering garlands and flowers upon the dying Holy Innocents.

The building in the middle distance is Rachel's tomb, the *martyrion* of her children. And Rachel stands in the midst of her children, in the midst of the mothers of Bethlehem.

Jeremiah 31.15-l7: 'Thus saith the Lord: a voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

'This saith the Lord: Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

'And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.'

Rubens has reacted against his model, the composition of Michelangelo's *Deluge*, by strikingly displacing the element of transformation. In the compositional sequence of his *Massacre of the Holy Innocents* the action thrusts beyond the assassin in the centre who pauses, holding up the march of events and at the same time intensifying the cruelty and emotional force of the scene. Beyond him, the action presses on to its end; and it is only there, after it is all over, that a surprise springs from nowhere. This surprise is not part of a logical sequence; it is the miracle that transcends thematic content.

All the action is pushed forward to the pier bearing the edict, which represents both the cause of the action and its purpose; and then comes a superadd-

[7] Jacob Burckhardt, *Erinnerungen aus Rubens*, Basle 1898, p. 140.

ed transformation scene, a truly manifest divine intervention which is also the fulfilment of a dramatic narration. Compare this with Raphael's equally dramatic, but classical, narration of the *Expulsion of Heliodorus*, in which a miracle similarly comes as the turning-point, in which the build-up of action and reaction among the human participants is abruptly brought to a halt, just to the right of centre, and the Temple manifests itself as the thematic reversal. The miracle cuts across an established continuum whose progression might have been expected to continue symmetrically, and the dramatic resolution does not transcend the theme, leaving the completed action as it was, but instead transforms it root and branch, presenting it in a new light. The action itself is transformed into something new through the continuation that it receives.

5. ALBERTI'S THEORY OF COMPOSITION AS THE ART IN PAINTING[1]

Our main interest in the former lectures involves questions concerning the importance of composition as well as its contribution to the representation of the subject matter. This was done while discussing the paintings of Michelangelo, Raphael and Rubens. We have also seen how Raphael and Rubens constructed and realised their compositions. Yet, it would be proper to discuss now theories, which concern composition. I would like therefore to speak about the comprehension of composition in the treatise of Leon Battista Alberti. Alberti was the first author occupied with the question of composition in painting. At the end of his lecture, I would like briefly to compare his treatise with the slightly earlier one of Cennino Cennini and with the later one of Lionardo.

When the ban on his father's side of the family had been lifted, Leon Battista Alberti returned to Florence in 1428 (or at the latest in 1434) to find the town of his birth embellished by a new art - the art of Brunelleschi, Donatello, Masaccio. Alberti had not seen these works emerge; he was suddenly confronted by them, much as we ourselves sometimes are.

Yet he understood these new works of art, and embarked on a critical discussion that would prove just as innovative as its subject. With his treatise '*De pictura libri tres*'[2] Alberti did *not* intend to write a *history* of painting, *nor* did he wish merely to pass on useful *workshop knowledge*; his aim was to provide a basis on which art could be *appraised and judged* (*iudicium*).

The thirty-one-year-old humanist - or, as the humanists called themselves - *orator* wrote his treatise in the year 1435, initially in Latin, which he

---

[1] Translated from the German by J.W. Gabriel. This lecture is a short version of: Rudolf Kuhn, "Alberti's Lehre über die Komposition als die Kunst in der Malerei." *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, vol. 28, 1984, 123-178.

[2] Leon Battista Alberti, *Opere volgari*, ed. Cecil Grayson, Bari, vol. 3 (1973), contains the Latin and the Italian version. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and on Sculpture, the Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*, ed. et transtulit Cecil Grayson, London 1972.

translated into Italian in 1436. He dedicated the Latin version to a layman, the Duke of Mantua, and the Italian version to an artist, the protagonist of the new art, Brunelleschi. As Creighton E. Gilbert[3] has pointed out, this was an important step, for with it Alberti provided both artist and layman with consistent criteria of judgement, enabling the artist to make himself understood to the layman in terms of his field, and enabling the layman to appraise this field practically and discuss it with the artist objectively. This marked the beginning of the *reasoned discussion of art* which has continued ever since, and in which artists and laymen alike participate. And we today can still learn from Alberti's beginnings how the works of quattrocento painters were judged by their contemporaries; whether the questions we ask about them could have been asked by a fifteenth-century observer; and concomitantly, what value this observer might have been able to attach to our questions. We might then learn to judge historical art in historical terms. But let us return to Alberti.

The possibility of debating, reasoning about art was one offshoot of that renewal that Renaissance of art in the field of painting which Masaccio brought about in practice and Alberti brought about in theory. But before going into Alberti's innovations, there is an older factor involved in his work, which must be mentioned first. When he set out to teach art to artists, with an eye to works yet to be created - and not by recourse to existing works only, as an art historian would do - Alberti followed a conception of art that had been transmitted to his time from antiquity and the Middle Ages: the notion that art could be taught and learned. As a teachable and learnable activity it comprehended the *exempla*, above all the works of Masaccio, and the *doctrina*, which Alberti now proceeded to set forth; both examples and doctrines belonged to one and the same art.

This conception of art naturally leads us to ask whether there might not be an aspect of painting, which cannot be taught, or learned, which emerges solely from what today we might call talent or genius, the *ingenium*. Did Alberti think there was such an aspect of painting? and if so, did he believe it to be peripheral or central to his argument? Let it be said at the outset that Alberti indeed discussed this aspect of painting with surprising lucidity, in the last book of his treatise; the clear way in which he associated the two aspects of painting, art and genius, seems to me one of the greatest merits of his discussion. I shall

---

[3] Creighton E. Gilbert, "Antique Frameworks for Renaissance Art Theory: Alberti and Pino", *Marsyas* 3, 1943-1945, pp. 91sqq.

go into both aspects, the teachable and learnable one first, and then that which is inseparable from it but which cannot be taught.

On the Art in Painting

Just as there is something beyond teachable and learnable art but directly involved with it, an aspect Alberti treated in his third book, so there is something prior to the art which he discussed in the first book of his treatise: the bases of the art of painting in reality and in human perception of reality. Alberti called these the roots, foundations, rudiments of art (*radices, fundamenta, rudimenta*). Put in the form of theses, these conditions of the art might run as follows:

1. What is the subject of painting? The subject of painting is the things in reality, which are visible.

2. How are these real things disposed and how are they to be apprehended in reality? The objects in reality are perceptibly disposed in space and appear to our eye in perspective. More precisely, visible objects occupy a location (*locus*) on the earth and, more important, they displace a certain volume of air, a space (*spatium*) whose extent is marked and bounded by their contours; the relation of these visible things consists in the relation of their locations, the spaces they occupy, and the spaces or intervals between them; this relation is depicted by means of perspective.

3. By what method do we apprehend things? The method of apprehension is comparison, a comparison of the locations and extents both of objects as a whole and of the partial locations and extents of their parts; that is, we measure objects and their parts. This measurement is inherent, that is, it comprehends the relation of partial extents to one another and to the whole extent of the object, i.e. its proportions. By means of this comparison, the objects are made to conform to our apprehension of visible reality; indeed, their representation and articulation renders them visible. The objects are subsequently judged in context by comparing their relations, which permits us to recognise their proportion (*symmetria, commensuratio*) existent or none existent.

As was soon to become apparent, these basic tenets of visibility, proportion, and perspective were highly important *topoi* for an appreciation of Renaissance painting. The crucial point for us is that Alberti discussed these *topoi*, especially perspective, in the first book of his treatise, calling them the rudi-

ments and foundations of art, but not confusing them with art itself. Yet as we all know, for decades art historians have not only paid due attention to the doctrines of proportion and perspective, but also have believed that by so doing they were treating the central *topoi* and essential inventions of Renaissance painting.

In my view Alberti, despite his contribution to the invention of perspective and the recipe he developed to depict perspective depth, thought differently. A distinction made in the field of language might help explain my point. In the arts of speaking and writing, there was a classical distinction, still in force in Alberti's time, between *ars recte dicendi* and *ars bene dicendi*, or between grammar as the correct use of language and rhetoric as the good or beautiful use of language. Similarly, the doctrines named, particularly that of perspective, guaranteed a correct depiction but not necessarily a good one. And as we all know, it was of good depiction, in analogy to rhetoric, that Alberti treated under the rubric of an *Art of Painting*; he considered correctness to be a mere condition, if a necessary condition, of good art.

In the second, intermediate book Alberti went on to discuss the art of painting; or, as he wrote in the introduction to the Italian version: "The second book gives art into the hands of the artist, by distinguishing its parts and explaining everything." The author conferred a threefold distinction on this book, his discourse on art. *Firstly*, he proclaimed that it would be written in a higher style; if in the first book, Alberti explained, he had tried to be clear and concise and had eschewed pleasing and ornamental language, now, in this second book, he hoped to cause the reader less dismay and ennui (I, 22). *Secondly*, Alberti wrote a great *exordium* for Book II. The first book had received a short, unelaborated preface and the third was desultorily introduced; the second, by contrast, had a long introduction in which Alberti treated the rank, dignity, and value of painting over five printed pages (II, 25-29). And *thirdly*, at the end of the introduction Alberti clearly outlined this second book as he had neither of the other two, writing that it would treat a) *circumscriptio*, outline or contour; b) *compositio*, composition; and c) *receptio luminum*, illumination, as the constituents of art - a scheme also found in the first and last sentences on the separate topics. By these means, Alberti the *orator* clearly emphasised the significance of Book II: his mention of style and his promise that it would be on a higher level awakened the reader's interest; the *exordium* on the importance of the subject disposed him favourably towards it; and the lucid scheme eased comprehension.

All three features fulfilled the demands placed by rhetoric on a lofty introduction: that it makes the reader *attentum, benevolem,* and *docilem*.

The most important section of Alberti's second book, in which he discusses the art of, and in, painting, is the middle section, the *theory of composition*. I will not be able to go into the other sections today, those on light and shade and on colour, which Moshe Barasch has exhaustively discussed in his well-known book, "Light and Colour in the Italian Renaissance Theory of Art."[4] I shall concentrate my remarks on composition only.

Alberti set forth a number of factors, which the artist should take into account when composing a picture. Some of these factors are so well known that they need only be mentioned in passing. We also know that Alberti placed at the centre of his scheme the narrative picture, the *storia* or *historia* - not the portrait, not even the representative altar painting; his treatise was devoted solely to narrative art. This genre, he wrote, was the most comprehensive as regards the parts of the composition, the most perfect as regards the way in which these parts are fit together, and the highest as regards the abundance and excellence of the things depicted.

Already in the first sentence on the *storia* or *historia*, Alberti characterised its most suitable and common stylistic level, writing that "A storia which justifies praise and admiration will be one that exhibits such charm and ornament as to make it so attractive that the gaze of connoisseur and layman alike will be held for a long while with a sense of pleasure and emotion" (II, 40). This description perfectly accords with the charming and ornamental style of language in which Alberti promised to write his second book, and it also corresponds to the relatively lofty, middle level of rhetoric, to which narration indeed possesses a natural inclination. As an exception, but only as that, Alberti mentioned a style whose concision and air of solitary grandeur lent it a special dignity, the high style, of which the *storia* of Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence may serve as an example (figs. 38 - 41). So we have, as the rule, the intermediate style, elegant, ornamented; and as the exception - if one that played an important role in Florence - the high style, dignified and sublime.

Alberti's *dicta* are familiar to all of us: the artist should observe and depict the *Copia rerum*, the abundance of things, and the *Varietas statuum atque motuum*, the variety of attitudes and movements of bodies - both of which were

---

[4] Moshe Barasch, *Light and Colour in the Italian Renaissance Theory of Art*, New York 1978.

essential to working in the intermediate style. To briefly recapitulate Alberti's own examples:

For the abundance of things he gives ". . . old men, middle-aged men, youths, boys, matrons, maidens, children, domestic animals, dogs, birds, horses, cattle, buildings and landscapes" (II,40), which were to be represented in a *storia*, mingled but each in its proper place, appropriate to the narration and conforming to a sense of modesty and dignity. This abundance of the visible world would give pleasure.

His example for the variety of attitudes and movements of figures reads "So let some stand, visible full face, their hands turned away and fingers spread, resting on one foot. Others may have their faces turned towards the first, their arms by their sides and their feet together - each figure should exhibit its own particular movements and actions. Still others should be resting in a seated or kneeling position, or be almost lying down. And if it be seemly, some may be naked, with others standing nearby in ingenious combinations of both states, part clothed, part naked" (II, 40).

It was of course not only the variety of physical attitudes and movements that interested Alberti but above all the variety of emotional states and moods these expressed, as Barasch pointed out in his essay of 1967, "Der Ausdruck in der italienischen Kunsttheorie der Renaissance."[5] For with the movements of the limbs, a painter expressed the movements of the soul and mind, such feelings and affects as anger, pain, fear, desire, etc. Alberti's own example of this reads: "For we observe how people who are *sad* because they are crushed by worry and weighed down by grief, seem dazed in all their senses and powers, and drag themselves along on unsteady limbs drained of colour. In those who mourn, the brow is clouded, the neck bent, and every part of their body droops as though weary and past care. But in *angry* people, the ire that inflames their passions swells and reddens their face and eyes, and all the movements of their limbs become the more violent and agitated the higher the fury of their heated temper grows. Yet when we are *happy and gay*, our movements are relaxed, and their every flexion has charm" (II, 41).

For an illustration of these physical attitudes and movements we might consult Masaccio's "Taxation for the Temple" (fig. 38), noting the figure of St. Peter in the middle scene, and those of the Apostles in profile to the left and

---

[5] Moshe Barasch, "Der Ausdruck in der italienischen Kunsttheorie der Renaissance", *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 12, 1967.

right; in the "Cathedra" (fig. 41), the seated St. Peter; and again in the "Taxation", St. Peter crouching in the left middle ground; in the "Baptism", the kneeling figure who, like the one next to him, is naked, while another, undressing, is "part naked"; or consider the member of the congregation in the "Almsgiving" (fig. 40) who is kneeling to give alms, and Ananias lying dead on the ground; or the "St. Peter Healing the Sick" (fig. 39), where juxtaposed at the left are a figure "almost lying down", one kneeling, and one standing.

As regards emotional movements, we might take, in Masaccio's "Taxation for the Temple", the figure of St. Peter in the middle scene, who is standing, indeed extended to his full height, his head held high, his forehead furrowed in anger and his eyebrows drawn together in annoyance, his left hand raised as if to ward off danger. Compare him to the figure of Christ: how differently, with what relaxation and ease, He moves; and how different again are the other positions of St. Peter himself, crouching at the left on the lakeshore, and at the right, giving the double drachma to the tax collector. Alberti would have been full of praise at such *Varietas statuum atque motuum animi vel corporis*; he might even have had an example of just this sort in mind.

I intend to place more than common emphasis here on Alberti's theory of the typical and the normal in the design of figures, because it seems to me that certain *norms or standards* are absolutely *essential to the establishment of relations among the figures in a composition*.

For Alberti, the typical and normal held an intermediate place between the variety of the world and the unity of a painting. With their aid, variety could be reduced to potential unity. Alberti alluded to this in many places; first, in connection with the *observation of reality*, where he noted in the movements of the body around its axis and centre of gravity the normal radius of action of all its parts - head, torso, arms and legs - and reduced these to eight rules[6] (II, 43). Another reference occurs in his description of the emotions expressed by physical movements, which I already read to you, and in which the examples of sad, angry, and joyful people were characterised in terms that lent their descriptions a strong resemblance to the melancholic, choleric, and sanguine temperaments (II, 41).

The third and fourth sequences of types and standards, Alberti thought, should be present in every *storia*. I have already cited the third sequence, which

---

[6] Rudolf Kuhn, "Alberti's Lehre über die Komposition als die Kunst in der Malerei." *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, vol. 28, 1984, p. 146.

contained basic positions (standing, seated, kneeling, reclining) and typical states (nude, semi-nude, clothed). It was evident from the text how Alberti conceived the relationship between basic position and completely delineated figure; by complete figuration Alberti understood additional elaboration or differentiation; and since he neglected to return to this process of differentiation in the course of his remarks, we are left with the basic poses and typical states. Or to put it the other way round: These truly formed the basis for all the rest. To again cite Alberti: "So let some stand, visible full face, their hands turned away and fingers spread, resting on one foot. Others may have their faces turned towards the first, their arms by their sides and their feet together - each figure should exhibit its own particular movements and actions. Still others should be resting in a seated or kneeling position, or be almost lying down. And if it be seemly, some may be naked, with others standing nearby in ingenious combinations of both states, part clothed, part naked" (II, 40).

This brings us to the fourth sequence, which concerns the basic directions of each position and movement. As we shall see, this sequence was of eminent importance for the creation of a composition. Alberti wrote: "Everything that changes location has seven directions of movement: either up or down, or to right or left, or receding into the distance, or on the other hand emerging out and towards us. The seventh kind of movement is that which is produced by going around in a circle" (II, 43).

We tend to rush over this kind of description, so dry is it and seemingly so opposed to an enjoyment of art and its expressive powers. But its schoolmasterly tone is no accident; these *dicta* were part of an art that could be taught and learned. Alberti went even further, stating that "I want all these movements to appear in a painting. There should be some figures that face towards us, and others going away into the distance, or to right or left" (II, 43). Here again, the path from basic directions to complete figuration was the same; again it involved an additional differentiation in which the basic direction remained present. Alberti explained this lucidly: "Then, some parts of one and the same body should be extended towards the spectator; others should recede; still others should be raised upwards and others be directed downwards" (II, 43). This would truly give rise to figures in multifarious movement.

To confirm the basic directions Alberti described, we might again turn to the example of Masaccio's "Taxation for the Temple" (fig. 38) and observe the standing figure of the tax collector turned away from us into the distance; that of Christ turned towards us, like his assistants; then the leading Apostles,

standing figures turned to right or left. Or we might take Masaccio's "Almsgiving" (fig. 40), where the figures are more strikingly juxtaposed: the mother given frontally, the child in her arms dorsally, those waiting for alms, and also the dead man, disposed laterally to the right; and laterally to the left, the Apostles and their following. It would almost appear that Alberti had based his observations on these very frescoes.

In order to grasp what this theory contained of importance for the design of figures, it might be useful to consider that it would already amount to elementary figuration to depict a figure in one of the basic positions (standing, seated, kneeling, reclining, etc.), in one of the basic states (nude, semi-nude, clothed), and in one of the basic directions. A clothed, frontal, standing figure, looking straight ahead with his arms at his sides and feet together - as every boy knows from physical education class - would already represent the first basic figure type in a huge collection. The decisive point here is that a juxtaposition of such figures, each different from the next, would in itself be sufficient to create a basic situation - expressive of people meeting: in confrontation, in adjacent apposition or in passing by. And even if these basic figures were to be differentiated and enriched by a variety of movements, to physically express what Alberti called "the well-nigh countless movements of the soul," this differentiation would nonetheless remain dependent on the basic situation.

Let us take another example by way of illustration. In Masaccio's "Taxation" (fig. 38) we see how a lateral position to the right is repeated three times in the Apostles at the left; how, in the distance, a frontal pose has been distinguished from these, and how they have been confronted with exactly opposing poses to the right; but also how the figures' movements have been enriched and animated. Other features in the "Taxation" are the contrast between the dorsal position of the tax collector and the frontal ones of Christ and his companions and of St. Peter. This relationship, pre-established by the basic positions and directions, provides the foundation on which the differentiated commerce of the figures unfolds.

To give yet another illustration, one, which emphasises the lasting significance of this distinction, let me show you a work done seventy-five years later, Raphael's "School of Athens." This is the second section of the composition (fig. 18), with the group of figures to the left and above the steps of the building. We see, *first*, an adolescent, semi-nude, walking into the scene (behind him is another in the same position and direction), but turning his head to look into the distance; there we see an old man, clothed like all of the rest of the fig-

ures to come, standing, ventral, but moving head and left arm laterally to the right. *Second*, after an interval, comes a row of young, middle-aged, and elderly men, all three standing and turned laterally to the right; behind them is another male figure, standing laterally to the right, but with his torso turned ventrally and his head and right arm turned laterally to the left. *Third*, we have a youth, standing in a frontal pose, but in process of turning aside. *Fourth* and finally, we see Socrates, standing laterally to the left. It is this sequence of basic positions that illustrates the acts of bringing, admitting and inviting written arguments, and that shows these being gradually superseded by the acts of listening, pondering, and debating; it is this sequence that transmits the narrative, the *storia*. And thanks to the interlocking and interweave of the basic directions throughout this passage, the group of figures is solidly established despite strong and continual changes of direction; indeed, this basic interweave makes the elaborated movements, the spontaneous changes of direction in the protagonists' gestures, their volitional and emotional movements, appear to full effect.

Whatever else needs to be said about the historical development that led to the art of Raphael, this one example at least shows what a step Alberti took when he suggested that variety be achieved not directly through an elaboration or differentiation of figures, but indirectly, by first establishing basic attitudes, typical states, and basic directions - the norms and types of figuration.

I shall not be able to discuss in detail the fact that these two highly important sequences of norms and types, that of basic positions and states, and that of basic movements, were derived from Quintilian's manual of rhetoric, as Cecil Grayson has shown[7] (*Institutio oratoria* II, 13, 8-11 and XI, 3, 105). Nor can I go into the precise relationship between Alberti's and Quintilian's theories here[8]. Let me merely point out that Alberti's sequences were borrowings, spoils which he used not as learned adornments of his treatise but which he fully incorporated into his argument; and that to Alberti, the humanist, they possessed the dignity of classic origin.

Up to this point I have spoken of the narrative picture, the *storia*, as the central task of painting for Alberti, and of the intermediate style as the most useful and common one, which naturally led to Alberti's main tenets of the

---

[7] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and on Sculpture, the Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*, ed. et transtulit Cecil Grayson, London 1972.

[8] Rudolf Kuhn, "Alberti's Lehre über die Komposition als die Kunst in der Malerei." *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, vol. 28, 1984, pp. 151-153.

abundance of things, and of the variety of positions and of physical and emotional movements. What I have not sufficiently emphasised is that Alberti not only considered composition the central feature of art in painting, but also that he had a lucid if unusual notion of the structure of a painting - as we might call it today. As soon as he began to define composition, Alberti put his finger on this structure. His definition, typically dry and concise, ran as follows: "Composition is the procedure (*ratio*) in painting by which the parts are put together (*componuntur*) into a pictorial work. . . The parts of the *storia* are the bodies, the parts of the bodies are members, and the parts of the members are surfaces. Hence the principal parts of the work are the surfaces, because from these come the members, from the members the bodies, from the bodies the storia, and finally the finished work. . . ." (II, 35).

This a lapidary definition, which seems completely logical and self-evident. But is it really? was this consistent hierarchy of surfaces, members, bodies, and *storia* really directly and immediately derived from the visible, spatially organised reality, which Alberti said the painter must grasp by comparison and measure?

I don't think it was. What, for instance, does the position of an individual figure among the many figures involved in a crowd in reality have to do with the relationship of member to body; and what, if anything, do these two things have to do with a juxtaposition of modelled surfaces?

In principle, the stepwise distinctions of this definition were of rational origin; objectively speaking, they were artificial distinctions. Alberti first distinguished a number of very different aspects, then put them together, composed them, to produce a stringent structure. Thanks to his distinctions, the artist knew what Alberti thought he should look for in nature, and what comparisons and relations he should discover in order to create a structured painting. This structure was not only very stringent, it was consistent, for every figure of the same rank would possess the same divisions into, and the same composition of, members; each member would in turn be consistently divided into and composed of surfaces; and each figure, similarly differentiated, would play its part in the composition of the *storia*, the narration in figures. All this would lead to a stringently designed and consistently articulated composition.

But what was the aim of this threefold and artificial process of composition; what was its visual purpose? In the composition of surfaces, the aim was to create *plasticity* in the figures; in the composition of members it was to evoke

their *movements*; and in the composition of bodies, finally, the aim was to tell a story, *narrate an event*.

What Surpasses Art in Painting

The question still remains how, according to Alberti, the abundance and variety of figures and groups that were to perform the action of a *storia* were to be arranged? How should a painter invent a sequence of figures; or, to use the technical term, how was he to determine the *ordo* of a composition? In the second book of Alberti's treatise, which ostensibly discusses art and all its constituents, there is not a single word on this subject. But we do find references to it in the third book, the one on artists.

The artist's invention, and the way he arranges a story, *inventio* and *ordo*, we are forced to conclude, did not belong to art as far as Alberti was concerned. For him, as I said before, art was a teachable and learnable activity. Apparently invention and ordering of a story went beyond art because they could not be taught or learned; they remained solely a matter of the *ingenium* - an artist's talent, gifts, imagination.

This brings me to the second part of my talk, in which I will briefly discuss that other aspect of composition which - to express something extremely positive in negative terms - is neither learnable nor teachable. But first, let me recapitulate: *What, according to Alberti, did the art of composition contribute to the depiction of a storia?*

First, this art permitted the painter to envisage an arrangement, a structure of surfaces, members, and figures, in terms of plasticity, movement, and narrative.

Second, it led the painter to observe reality with an eye to discovering the abundance of things and the variety of positions, states, physical and emotional movements, which in turn led him to note the types of physical movement characteristic of girls and women, adolescent boys and adult men, and of old people (something I did not go into); to observe those types of mental movement that as we saw, resembled the four temperaments; and to observe the action of movements as related to body axis, centre of gravity, and radius of movement of each part of the body.

Third and finally, the art of composition enabled the painter to establish a structure in his depiction of this observed reality by employing the standard

positions, standard states, and standard directions of figures, and to elaborate or differentiate these to produce an effect of rich movement and variety.

But, as we noted, invention and ordering lay beyond this art of composition and belonged to the sphere of natural gifts. *Art, we might conclude, served to create the best possible conditions for the imagination of the artist to invent stories told by arrangements of figures. Die Kunst, so könnte man sagen, schuf die optimalen Bedingungen für das Ingenium, Geschichten als Figurenfolgen zu erfinden.*

Inventio and *Ordo*

For Alberti, the invention of a story (*inventio*) and the arrangement or ordering of figures (*ordo*) belonged inseparably together. His examples of good inventions were examples of well-ordered inventions. There was no theory of composition as the creation of a pictorial context or whole independent of a particular depiction. Hence, ordering and invention were not a part of art to Alberti. The result is that we can only conjecture about Alberti's notion of a possible order; his theory of context remains hypothetical. Let me raise a few points in explanation.

1. Although conceiving and arranging a number of figures and groups of figures to tell an invented story lay beyond art as such, in the realm of the *ingenium*, this did not mean that for Alberti they lay outside the sphere of thought, explanation, and criticism, whether the artist's own or that of third parties. The artist's activity involved *excogitare, commentari, praemeditari* - thinking out, commenting on, preconsidering.

The relevant passage in the treatise reads: "When we set out to paint a *storia*, we will spend some time beforehand considering in what order and by what means the composition might best be done. By making (compositional) studies on paper, we can work out (or conceive) the story as a whole and in each of its parts, and then can ask all our friends for advice. We will endeavour to give everything such thorough preconsideration that there will be nothing in the picture whose exact location we do not know perfectly"; and, somewhat later: ". . . (we will see) that everything. . . is put in its proper place" (III, 61).

The painter's considerations and the advice he obtained from his friends were meant to ensure that all the figures and groupings would find their proper place in the arrangement, and that consequently his invention would be consistent in whole and in its parts.

2. The worked out and finished composition of a *storia* was a whole, an ordered arrangement of figures; there is no indication, however, that Alberti considered it a unity - that the relationship of its parts to one another and to the whole had the character of necessity in his eyes, or that the removal or addition of a figure would have disturbed the composition. Still less can we say that Alberti considered a composition an organic entity. Although he did recommend that abundance be limited, this was to be done in view of fitness to purpose (*convenire*), dignity and restraint (*dignitas, verecundia*), and in view of the stylistic level chosen. This conception of the composition as a whole continued to accord with quattrocento painting practice for a long period.

3. The parts of the ordered whole consisting of figures and intended to tell a story, had a certain independence and a certain intrinsic weight. In the passage just cited, Alberti expressly mentioned the individual parts of the storia (*singulae eiusdem historiae partes*); these must have possessed such significance and independence in his eyes that he could recommend they be considered and studied in separate drawings.

And to Alberti, of course, composing a story meant neither disposing every element separately nor throwing them all together anyhow, but ordering them - with the aid of empty spaces, which might perhaps be conceived as intervals or *caesuras* (II, 40). So our attention should indeed concentrate on the ordered parts of the composition.

4. Unlike the sequence or order of words in rhetoric, the sequence of figures and groups, the order of a painted composition, was a spatial sequence. This may be inferred from the premise given by Alberti in Book I, namely that the spatial order of the visible world is the subject of painting. This statement was expressly repeated in the passage just cited, where Alberti discussed the manner in which a sequence of figures should be conceived and worked out.

There is reason to assume that Alberti conceived the storia as composed by the laws of perspective. Yet since he never mentioned perspective in connection with composition later (Book II, Part 2; or Book III, chapter on *Ordo* and *Inventio*), the normal arrangement of figures was probably in the foreground, within an equidistant, shallow space, until some artist's lucid invention, such as Masaccio's for St. Peter by the lake in the "Taxation", led to a different level of order.

Were painter and spectator then left with no further indication of how Alberti conceived sequences of figures? Not entirely, if you consider two hypotheses (a-b) and one example (c). Let us take the hypotheses first.

(a) In the second book, painter and spectator could read lists of objects and standard positions which Alberti wished to see depicted, lists that were so lucidly arranged and concrete that, to a painter, they must have immediately suggested ideas for figures and, on account of the enumeration, sequences of figures. First there was Alberti's list illustrating the "abundance of things". Its arrangement was simple, being a series the first part of which consisted of four members, the second and third of three members each, the fourth and fifth of two each, which adds up to four - giving a *storia* in which appeared, mixed, but each in its proper place, ". . . old men, middle-aged men, youths, boys, matrons, maidens, children, domestic animals, dogs, birds, horses, cattle, buildings, and landscapes" (II, 40). Each part of this series lists the members in descending order, except for the last, which finishes in ascending order. The second to last series, equal to the last in number of members and together with it conforming to the first, is emphasised, because following three series of gradually diminishing distinction and size it suddenly names larger and more imposing objects. Every painter who read this closely would have recalled such series, repeated, varied, depicted in mirror image, frequently arranged in diagonal parallel lines leading into the background, even separated into men and women with children, from the easel paintings and especially the frescoes of the fourteenth century: such series, our painter might conclude, should be retained, but expanded or elaborated with a view to the abundance of things pointed out by Alberti. Nor were buildings and landscapes capping sequences of persons and living creatures all that unusual; to take a new example of the fifteenth century, Masaccio's "Taxation" (fig. 38), there is a landscape to the left and architecture to the right which certainly count for themselves and are not merely background. For an illustration of the abundance of man's ages we might take St. Peter's retinue in Masaccio's "Healing of the Sick" (fig. 39), a youth, an adult, and an old man; and for the same abundance depicted in series as a pictorial element, we could point to the row of Apostles at the left in Masaccio's "Taxation", where an old man, a middle-aged man, and a youth are enumerated.

Both a general and a detailed description of earlier compositions in Alberti show that he saw and recommended such series to represent emotions as well. In Giotto's "Navicella", the Apostles in the ship, four of them at the railing and seven crouching and standing farther back, struck Alberti as representing different emotions depicted in juxtaposition. And he read in Quintilian (II, 13, 13, as Grayson has shown) and praised it in his treatise that Timanthes, in the "Sacrifice of Iphigenia", had represented a series of emotions ascending by de-

grees, and had even placed at the highest point the *topos* of the undepictable. Alberti wrote: "They praise Timanthes of Cyprus. . . because, when he had made Calchas sad and Ulysses even sadder at the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and employed all his art and skill on the grief-stricken Menelaus, he could find no suitable way to represent the expression of her disconsolate father; so he covered his head with a veil, and thus left more for the onlooker to imagine about his grief than he could see with his eye" (II, 42). Like Quintilian, and paralleling the veiled face, Alberti does not mention Agamemnon by name.

(b) Alberti's second sequence was that of standard positions and states, which I read to you earlier. Now if we listen to it with the ear of a painter and picture it in our mind's eye, this sequence contains a series of figures which comes close to representing an entire three-part composition of figures and groupings. Beginning with two figures, standing upright and juxtaposed to one another, it continues with a declining series, then closes with two more standing figures which are quite differently characterised than the first two. Alberti writes: "(I) So let some stand, visible full face, their hands turned away and fingers spread, resting on one foot. Others may have their faces turned (towards the first), their arms by their sides and their feet together - each figure should exhibit its own particular movements and actions. (2) Still others should be resting in a seated or kneeling position, or be almost lying down. (3) And if it be seemly, some may be naked, with others standing nearby in ingenious combinations of both states, part clothed, part naked" (II, 40).

How closely this order, this sequence of figures reflects a conceivable storia becomes strikingly obvious when we compare Donatello's "Lamentation" relief (fig. 43) of thirty years later (Florence, S. Lorenzo), whose basic composition is tripartite and reveals (l) figures standing upright to the left; then (2), in the middle, a series of figures seated, bending down, and on the ground in diminishing heights; and finally (3), at the right, more standing figures, differently characterised.

(c) And now for an example of the sequence of figures in a *storia*. Among the inventions Alberti took from the poets and recommended to the painters was the "Calumny" by Apelles, which he cited from Lucian. He wrote that ". . . the great virtue of (a *storia*) resides primarily in its invention. Indeed, invention has such power that it alone, even without pictorial representation," says Alberti, "can give pleasure. One's admiration is already aroused by reading the description Lucian gives. . ." (III, 53). All of the characters in the "Calumny" except for the judge, Midas, and the young man are personifications. Now

what is noteworthy about Alberti's description of it is, *first*, the number of determinations of the figures' positions, often preceding the description of their acts, and of their relations to one another (*erat, adstabant, adventans, est dux, sunt comites, adest, sequens*). Second, it is striking that the figures' activities are rarely described using finite verbs, but most often by compound participles or relative clauses, which serve to further differentiate their states.

The composition of the "Calumny" had two sections, in each of which the figures were opposed or juxtaposed. On one side (whether left or right Alberti does not say; conceivably, unlike Botticelli's (fig. 42) depiction of sixty years later, on the left) stood a figure flanked by two companions (recalling Christ with his assistants in Masaccio's "Taxation") which Alberti described as "attended on each side …." On the other side of the painting stood a figure recognisably the main figure, since two others were described as her *comites* and a third as her *dux*, and since Alberti began with her on this side even though the man leading her (*dux*) must have been closer to the sequence on the other side. Then came two further, individual figures.

Alberti's text reads: "In the painting there was a man with enormous ears sticking out, attended on each side by two women, Ignorance and Suspicion; from the other side Calumny herself was approaching in the form of an attractive woman, but whose face seemed too well versed in cunning, and she was holding in her left hand a lighted torch, while with her right hand she was dragging by the hair a youth with his arms outstretched towards heaven. Leading her was another man, pale, ugly and fierce to look upon, who has justifiably been compared to those exhausted by long service in the battle-line. They identified him correctly as Envy. There are two other women attendant on Calumny and busy arranging their mistress's dress; they are Treachery and Deceit. Behind them comes Repentance clad in mourning and rending her hair, and in her train chaste and modest Truth" (III,53). The framework of the Latin text reads: "*Erat enim vir unus. . . quem circa duae adstabant mulieres. . . parte alia ipsa Calumnia adventans. . . manu sinistra. . . tenens, altera vero manu. . . trahens adolescentem qui manus. . . tendit. Duxque huius est vir quidam. . . Sunt et aliae duae Calumniae comites. . . ornamenta. . . componentes, . . . Post has. . . veste operata et sese dilanians adest Poenitentia, proxime sequente. . . Veritate.*"

We can visualise the main figure, an adult man, between Ignorance and Suspicion, and how, led by approaching Envy, Calumny accompanied by Treachery and Deceit drags a youth towards him; how Repentance follows, after an interval; and then Truth. This description, which clearly follows the sequence

of figures, the *ordo* of the composition, is Alberti's example of an invention. This indicates that an invention is first ordered, a story first conceived as a sequence of figures; and that this sequence and order of the composition is not conceived in abstract terms but in terms of representation.

As Alberti's description of the "Calumny" of Apelles shows, sequences of figures in painting can indeed be recognised. This fact is important for our method as art historians. According to Alberti, figure sequences resulted from thought, careful consideration, and commentary or criticism; and the artist's critical discussion with his friends can and ought to be extended. Alberti's summing up of his insight into the figure sequence took the form, modelled on antiquity, of an appreciative description: "*historiam recitare*" (III, 58), as he called it. He also wrote that the description of an invention could be pleasing in itself, apart from its existence in painted form; this was because the description he cited followed the sequence of figures (except for the displaced *dux*) and aimed at a concreteness of motif and articulation rivalling that of the painting, an attempt to visualise *ordo* and *inventio* in words. The condition for this, vice-versa, was that the figures and their sequence had reached a degree of definiteness and articulation which until then had been achieved only in literary texts. The art of composition, with its consistent definition of surfaces, members and bodies, of standpoint and movement, of basic positions and directions and their supplementary differentiations, and with its consistent perception of the human body as a combination of parts - torso, head, arms, legs, all capable of action and expression - created that articulated figurative language which enabled the painter to fully develop every aspect of the story he wished to depict.

In this phase of the history of fine art, however, invention and figure sequence still remained aspects of painting that could not be taught or learned; no instructions were yet provided. Accordingly, the listings I took from the book "*de Arte*" for my hypothetical doctrine of context included no direct instructions on how to arrange figures in sequence; they merely embodied a tendency to figure sequences; but even so, they contributed towards creating conditions essential for the invention of stories as sequences of figures.

In conclusion, let me briefly discuss the historical position of Alberti's theory of *composition as the crux of art in painting*. To do this, as you know, we must describe its relationship with the "Libro dell' Arte" of Cennino Cennini, which was written a generation earlier, and to Leonardo da Vinci's "Trattato

della Pittura," which was written two generations later - texts of the first and the final years of the same fifteenth century.[9]

Alberti's relationship to Cennini's "Libro dell'Arte". As we all know, in his theory of painting Alberti raised the rank of art. This achievement is best understood, I believe, not by reference to the art but by reference to the *ingenium*, or more precisely, to that activity of the *ingenium* which was not treated in the theory of art but passed over. In the practice of painting, as Alberti's theory implies, the artist's *ingenium*, his natural personal gifts and talent, go hand in hand with his art, the application of what he has learned from theory, practice, and the models he admires; and to create a good work, the *ingenium* must do more than merely apply what it has learned in the way of art.

By comparison to Cennini's theory, three points should be emphasised: *First*, Alberti simply excluded from its proper domain a large part of the material side of art, the knowledge of materials, recipes, and techniques so crucial to its practice; in the case of colours, paints, he refused outright to discuss such matters (II, 48). For him, these things no longer belonged to the art involved in painting. *Secondly*, Alberti rearranged the main constituents of this art. In Cennini's theory, art had been divided, very practically, into two components, *disegnare* and *colorire* (drawing and painting in colour; Chapter 4). Alberti divided art into three components: *circumscriptio* (contouring), *compositio* (composition), and *receptio luminum* (illumination). Now the first category, contouring, was less comprehensive than Cennini's category of drawing, not including, for instance, the light and shade of drawing on the *carta tinta*. And Alberti's third category, illumination, included more than Cennini's second category, namely colour and *chiaroscuro* both. In other words, Alberti gave up the practical distinction between drawing and colour as the basis of a theory of art. He raised contour drawing to an independent first component of art, that method by which the extent of things and their position in space were defined. And he combined *chiaroscuro* and colour into a third component. Indeed, it was Alberti who first established a connection between these two features in art theory, quite apart

[9] For comprehensive discussions see: Rudolf Kuhn, "Cennino Cennini. Sein Verständnis dessen, was die Kunst in der Malerei sei, und seine Lehre vom Entwurfs- und vom Werkprozeß", *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 36, 1991, pp. 104-153; idem, "Lionardo's Lehre über die Grenzen der Malerei gegen andere Künste und Wissenschaften. Beschreibung seiner Lehre mit Übersetzung herausgehobener Texte", *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 33, 1988, pp. 215-246.

from the fact that, as Barasch[10] has pointed out, he treated light and shade and colour separately within this section. *Thirdly*, and most importantly, Cennini had not considered composition part of teachable and learnable art at all; it was essentially a matter for the *ingenium*, the *fantasia*, alone. That is why artists of the period did not feel it an injury to their professional pride when invention and composition were stipulated by a patron or by tradition. Now Alberti, as we have seen, put this same aspect of composition at the centre of his theory of art in painting.

To put it differently, what Alberti did was to shift the boundaries of art within the territory of painting:

he shifted them away from the realm of craft and far into that realm which up to then had been the preserve of the individual artist's imagination, that of his patron, or of tradition. Alberti did this in emulation of rhetoric; by excluding mere artisanship and shifting art to questions of composition, he exalted the art in painting to an *ars bona*, on the same level with rhetoric. This displacement of composition from a domain essentially that of the *ingenium* into the domain of an *ars bona* that could be taught and learned, increased intellectual awareness of the tasks of composition, which in turn encouraged and permitted a consistent articulation of structure and a consistent articulation of figure sequences. There was a limit to this shift, however, for Alberti did not include the entire field of composition in teachable and learnable art, omitting, as we have seen, theory and rules concerning the arrangement of figures and the establishment of context - in a word, the *ordo*.

Alberti's relationship to Leonardo's "Trattato della Pittura." For the sake of brevity, let me simply reduce the difference between Leonardo's theory and Alberti's to the statement that Leonardo took two giant leaps forward with respect to the earlier man. *First*, his theory brought a qualitative leap in the conception of composition. If Alberti spoke of light and shade, Alberti spoke of light and shade in the individual figure; and when Leonardo spoke of *chiaroscuro* he meant the lights and darks of each figure in relation to adjacent objects and under their influence. This innovation of considering the total context also extended to invention and to the arrangement of actions. Not only were the figures to be intelligently disposed, but this disposition was to be founded on an experience and observation of reality, on a thorough study of its relations. And

[10] Moshe Barasch, *Light and Colour in the Italian Renaissance Theory of Art*, New York 1978.

with Leonardo the establishment of a context, the invention of an *ordo*, became synonymous with representation of reality. *Secondly*, in connection with this, Leonardo no longer treated painting as a whole under the rubric of a fine art, the paradigm of an *ars bona*, but under that of a science of all visible things and of everything that can be rendered visible, and this in an overall, consistent context.

Alberti had reached the plateau of viewing composition as the centre of the art involved in painting; and in so far as it was both centre and art, it established optimum conditions for the imagination to invent stories as sequences of figures. From that point on, the painting of the medieval period was separated in terms of theory from that of the emergent modern age; they had been sundered in terms of the conception of what belonged to art in the practice of painting and what did not.

6. On the History and Analysis of Composition as Method and as Topic including Analyses of the Compositions of Raphael's Fire in the Borgo and Picasso's Guernica[1]

I would like first to summarise in a chronological order the development of the comprehension of composition in the writings of Cennino Cennini, Alberti and Lionardo, ending in this lecture with Lodovico Dolce. And then to analyse and compare the composition of two paintings: One belongs to the Renaissance Era and the other is a masterpiece of our time. These are Raphael's *Fire in the Borgo* and Picasso's *Guernica*. Despite the progress in the development of the comprehension of composition, which occurs over the long period stretching between the Renaissance and today, I would rather concentrate on Alberti's basic conceptions while analysing these paintings, for reasons, which will be briefly explained.

Part One

1

It is well known that the understanding of a historical topic is also, in every case, the understanding of the person who understands: it is we who understand a given thing. It is equally well known that even the systematic and methodical understanding that is scholarship arises from - and is directed by - the questions that the scholars ask: in other words, by the nature of their interest in the historical topic concerned. This governs what they see and what they choose, methodically and systematically, to emphasise.

---

[1] Written for Avinoam Shalem from Haifa, 'ihm meine Hand zu weisen'. Translated from the German by David Britt. First published: Rudolf Kuhn, "On the History and Analysis of Composition as Method and as Topic." *Artibus et Historiae 41 (XXI), 2000.*

And so a current interest gives rise to a philosophical and aesthetic perspective, a psychological and sociological perspective, and a pragmatic historical perspective, all of equal validity in the discussion of the artist and his work. Equal in validity to each other, and also equal in validity to the further perspectives of stylistic evolution, of iconology, and of the history of composition. The latter is the perspective that I intend to take today.

It is possible to say, of course, that certain perspectives and methods differ from others in that they are attuned to historical forms of artistic practice and theory - or at least to those of a given period - and that these perspectives and methods have the advantage of corresponding in some way to those that governed the making of the work itself, the work of the artist. These perspectives and methods, one might say, are not only directed towards a historical topic but are historically verified, or even historical in themselves.

For instance, iconology and iconography, as we know them, represent an academic systematisation of an approach that already existed in the age of Mannerism: in, for instance, Joannes Molanus' book, *De picturis et imaginibus sacris* (Louvain 1570). Its origins go back even further - think of the typological study of the Old and New Testament.

Again, stylistics and the history of style are a systematisation of another mode of criticism that dates from the age of Mannerism. This is to be found in a highly developed state in Giorgio Vasari's book, *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italiani* (Florence 1550). Vasari established the distinction between period, local and personal styles.

Firstly, as you know, he distinguished *tre maniere* within the painting of the Latin world, as re-founded by Cimabue and Giotto: the phase of reawakening in the fourteenth century; the phase of growth and ornamental elaboration in the fifteenth century; and the phase of accomplishment - a very recent one, for Vasari - in the High Renaissance, with its especial degrees of *bellezza* and *maestà*. Secondly, as you know, Vasari distinguished between the Florentine\Roman *maniera*, based on drawing or *disegno*, and the Venetian style, based on colour or *colore*. Thirdly, he distinguished between the *maniere* of individual artists, and indeed recognised the stylistic evolution of a single artist under changing influences, as in the three *maniere* of Raphael.

In a similar way, compositional analysis and the history of composition represent an endeavour to systematise a critical approach that was already present in the work of Leon Battista Alberti, as shown in his treatise of 1435, *De pictura libri tres*.

2

In the age of Mannerism, just as in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the forms of criticism based on style and on content became divorced and mutually antagonistic, each offsetting, and at the same time reinforcing, the one-sidedness of the other. It seems to me that the third form of criticism, the history and analysis of composition, occupies a special position. Its theoretical basis dates from 1435, considerably earlier than those of the other two: this means that the theory came into existence concurrently with Renaissance painting itself, and that it reflects the ideas that accompanied and guided the making of the works from the outset. From that moment on, there existed an explicit concern with composition. The function of compositional analysis, too, is a special one: it sets out to explain the inner structure, the construction, and the narrative figuration, of a work of art, defining both the parts themselves and their cohesive arrangement or *ordo*.

I shall go further. By clarifying the inner cohesion of a work of art, the history and analysis of composition completes the understanding of its iconographical and iconological content. By defining the location and inner coherence of the component parts, and by interpreting them as parts of a progressive - and perhaps an evolving - argument, it seeks to show what comes first, what follows, and what comes last. What is more, I think that the history and analysis of composition complements stylistic analysis by reintegrating the described visual characteristics of a work into the unity of form and content, the unity of representation.

3

Composition, which is our theme, has not always been a single entity: it has a history of its own, both in itself and in what can be traced of its theory. [2]

[2] For comprehensive discussions see: Rudolf Kuhn, "Cennino Cennini. Sein Verständnis dessen, was die Kunst in der Malerei sei, und seine Lehre vom Entwurfs- und vom Werkprozeß", *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 36, 1991, pp. 104-153; idem, "Alberti's Lehre über die Komposition als die Kunst in der Malerei", *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, vol. 28, 1984, pp. 123-178; idem, "Lionardo's Lehre über die Grenzen der Malerei gegen andere Künste und Wissenschaften. Beschreibung seiner Lehre mit Übersetzung herausgehobener Texte", *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 33, 1988, pp. 215-246.

To illustrate this, I shall cite four time segments from just hundred and fifty years.

1. Cennino Cennini, whose *Libro d'arte*[3] dates from 1404, saw himself as part of a tradition that went back to Giotto. In his book, an avowedly didactic work on the art of painting, Cennini defined composition as one of the painter's tasks (chapters 67 and 122); but he did not follow this with a single indication of how to practise or to learn composition - except, perhaps, one: "take your measure well."

In face of the important compositional achievements of Giotto, and also those of Maso di Banco, of Bernardo Daddi, of Simone Martini, of Ambrogio and Pietro Lorenzetti, and later of Altichiero and others, in monumental history painting alone, all that one can say is that the artists' unaided talent or *ingenium* - Cennini would have called it *fantasia* - enabled them to compose without needing to be instructed, led or constrained by any theory of art.

2. The growing variety of compositional practice, and the achievements of the individual artists I have mentioned, may well have stimulated writers to reason more explicitly on the subject and to give more considered directions to artists as a result: in other words, to incorporate composition in art theory. In any case, the situation changed radically in 1435 with the appearance of Alberti's *De pictura libri tres*[4]. Here, not only had composition become a part of the teachable and learnable portion of art: it was its very centre. In the first book of his treatise, Alberti discussed the foundations of painting, including perspective; in the third book he discussed the artist; and in the intervening, second book he discussed 'art in painting and its parts', namely outlining, lighting and - centrally - composition (*circumscriptio, compositio, receptio luminum*).

The art of composition, once learned, would contribute to the presentation of a historical subject - a *storia* - as follows (I abbreviate drastically):

First, the art of composition made it possible to plan the painting as a structure built up from surfaces, members and solid bodies (*superficies, membra, corpora*), in terms of plasticity, movement and action.

---

[3] Cennino Cennini, *Il Libro dell'Arte*, commentato e annotato da Franco Brunello, con una prefazione di Licisco Magagnato, Vicenza 1971, 2nd ed. 1982.

[4] For the Latin version accompanied by a translation in Italian see: Leon Battista Alberti, *Opere volgari*, ed. by Cecil Grayson, Bari, vol. 3 (1973).

Second, it induced the painter to observe reality in terms of its profusion of objects (*copia rerum)* and its diversity of attitudes and physical and emotional movements, (*varietas statuum atque motuum animi vel corporis)*; it led him to observe the types of physical movement characteristic of girls, women, youths, mature men and old people, and the types of mental movement that corresponded to the Four Temperaments; also to observe the working of movements in relation to the body axis, to the centre of gravity and to the radius of movement of each part of the body.

Third and last, the art of composition enabled the painter to underpin this structure, in depicting this observed reality, by employing standard attitudes, standard states and standard directions for his figures, and then to differentiate these to create a rich effect of movement and variety.

In parenthesis: this summary of Alberti's theory reveals that the theory of composition is not a matter of recipes but of guidelines for judgement and observation.

To continue: if we understand this theory of Alberti's, it is interesting that the art of composition, for him, did not include the invention of a history, or even the arrangement of the figures - although we should call this composition in the narrower sense. As far as Alberti was concerned, these matters still lay outside the realm of teachable and learnable art and belonged to that of natural talent or *ingenium*.

The Art of Composition, one might say, supplied the optimal conditions in which the *ingenium* could invent stories as sequences of figures.

Alberti does not tell us much about the way to invent such stories; and what he does say is not to be found in his Book II, on art, but in Book III, which deals with the artist himself and his *ingenium*.

If we look at these passages, we are struck by the close association between the invention of the history that is to be narrated (*inventio*), and the arrangement of the invention (*dispositio*), the ordering of the figures and groups (*ordo* and *modus*). Alberti's chosen instances of excellent 'inventions', such as the Calumny of Apelles, were all ordered inventions. There existed no theory of composition as the creation of a coherent whole, independent of any specific representation. As Alberti saw it, it was for the artist, on the basis of his natural gifts, to invent stories as sequences of figures, both in general and in detail (*tum totam historiam, tum singulas eiusdem historiae partes)*; to devise, consider and plan them (*excogitare, commentari, praemeditari*); - and to discuss them with his friends. This was therefore something that could be meaningfully discussed.

And the objective was to ensure "that in the end all is so well worked out in advance that there will be nothing in the work of which it will not be apparent where it must find its place." (III,61.)

Alberti's Book II does not suppose the artist to possess a repertoire of figures from which to compose a narrative picture: again according to Book III, as I have just said, inventions were regarded as good ones only if they were ordered inventions, with close ties between the part and the whole. We therefore need to think twice about Alberti's use of the Latin word *compositio*. In general modern usage, 'composition' tends to suggest the ingredients of a composite or a compound; but it seems better to read the word, in the context of Alberti, as meaning 'placing together' or 'presenting together'.

3. I now come to the third step in the historical sequence, a step that was taken by Lionardo da Vinci in the unfinished *Trattato della pittura*[5] that he wrote around 1500. I shall restrict myself to one aspect of this, and I shall do the same with the fourth step.

As we have seen, Alberti expected the artist, after thinking the matter over and discussing it with friends, to arrange his figures and groups in such an intelligent and rational way that the history would be clearly presented; it would follow that the figures and groups would all be in the right places. This arrangement was a matter for the artist to settle, without any additional work of observation, or any special study of Nature and reality. The arrangement of the composition was thus based on reasoning and nothing but reasoning. But with Lionardo all this had changed.

Whenever Alberti referred to *chiaroscuro*, he meant light and shade as they affected the individual figure: but what Lionardo meant by *chiaroscuro* was the light and shade of the figure under the influence of adjacent objects and in relation to them, and he investigated this relationship in Nature and in reality. The same went for composition: according to Lionardo, the arrangement of figures and groups was to be founded on observation and experience of Nature and reality; the relationships were to be investigated. And so the creation of such

[5] For the Italian version accompanied by a translation and annotations in German see: Lionardo da Vinci, *Das Buch von der Malerei*, ed. by Heinrich Ludwig, vols. 1-3. Vienna 1882 (Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte etc. ed. by Rudolf Eitelberger v. Edelberg), Reprint Osnabrück 1970.

relationships, the invention of an *ordo*, was now itself a representation of reality.

I shall quote two passages to illustrate this.

In the first, Lionardo demands this study of reality and states its importance for composition:

Then one observes and takes note of . . . the postures of persons in various emotional states . . . as for example when two men quarrel and each is convinced that he is in the right . . . And you also note the attitudes of the bystanders and their grouping (conpartitione). And that will teach you how to compose histories (e questo t'insegnerà conporre le istorie). (§ 179.)

In the second passage, conventional forms of figure combination are converted from observations into rules:

Do not mix a number of youths with a number of old men, nor young men with children, nor women with men, unless they are mixed and conjoined by the action that you want to portray. My usual practice in normal history compositions is to include (only) a few old men and to keep them separate from the young. For the old are few in number, and their habits differ from those of the young; and where there is no conformity of habits, no friendship can be concluded, and where no friendship exists, separation results. (Sections 378, 379.)

I pass over a great deal, notably Lionardo's conception of painting as a science based on categorical observation rather than as a liberal art; and the effect of this conception on the act of composing; also Lionardo's written descriptions of specimens of invented landscape.

4. I now come to the fourth step, which I see as having been taken by Lodovico Dolce in his *Dialogo della pittura*[6] of 1557.

Alberti had seen narrative painting as a combination of figures, groups and other elements, but not as a whole, united by inner necessity (which is how, thirty years later, he defined the work of the architect). For Dolce, on the other hand, the narrative painting was such a whole. Indeed, he argued that in a sense it was an organic whole, a body: 'from all that is contained in the *storia*, with all its many figures, a body must be produced that is not discordant (*dinota, che in*

[6] Edition: Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquencento*, Bari 1960 (Scrittori d'Italia), vol. 1, pp. 141-206.

tutto il contenimento della istoria, la quale abbracci molte figure, si faccia un corpo che non discordi, p. 168).'

More important still; to denote the whole, the totality of a painting, Lionardo had used terms like *componimento* - composition - but not, as far as I can see, any term that defined the whole as a visual unity, with a qualitative identity of its own. Dolce, on the other hand, did use such a term. And the term he used was *forma*. *'Il disegno è la forma*': drawing is the form with which the painter represents the history (p.164).

Elsewhere Dolce wrote: '*La invenzione si appresenta per la forma*': 'the invention presents itself through the form, and the form is none other than the drawing' (pp. 171-72). Clearly, then, Dolce was not content to say merely that the invention presented itself through the drawing; he needed a specific term to denote some formal quality in the invention as drawn: something, furthermore, that could not adequately be described as 'composition' or 'the figures'.

Alberti brought composition into the centre of the theory of art in painting; Lionardo called for the construction of the work to be accounted for by the observation of reality; for Dolce, the visual appearance of the invented whole had attained a formal quality of its own. That would be one way of summarising the history of the theory of composition.

I shall break off my account of the history of composition at this point, partly because I have yet to clarify the further steps to my own satisfaction. And I shall not go on to argue that (and how) these four stages in the evolution of compositional theory correspond to parallel epochs in the practice of composition in painting.

Part Two: Examples

Instead, for comparative analysis, I have chosen two compositions; one dates from the High Renaissance and one is modern. Each of these compositions is a 'whole' because of the completion in the development of the subject matter and theme and the formation of the proportions of its components; and this 'whole' is conspicuously the *forma* of the picture and composition. The earlier composition follows the advice of Lionardo concerning the creation of the relationship among figures and groups in a picture. However, the arrangement of the composition of the modern example is based again on reasoning, and nothing but reasoning, as if it follows the instruction of Alberti.

My first choice is Raphael's *Incendio del Borgo (Fire in the Borgo,* fig. 44). This fresco (7.28 x 4.95 m or approximately 24 x 16 feet) is to be found in the room to which it has given its name, the *Stanza dell'Incendio*, which was probably the private dining-room (*triclinium penitior*) of the new apartments built for Popes Julius II Rovere and Leo X Medici, in the Vatican Palace in Rome. It was painted by Raphael and his workshop, probably between 1514 and 1517, on the orders of Leo X. It depicts an episode described in the *Liber pontificalis*[1], in which a great fire that threatened to destroy the Borgo area of Rome in the year 847 was miraculously extinguished by the blessing of Pope Leo IV. This was the event of which Leo X, with or without a specific reason, wanted to remind himself and others. How does Raphael show this event?

My second choice is Picasso's *Guernica* (fig. 45): this painting (7.82 x 3.51 m or approximately 25 1/2 by 11 1/5 feet), now in Madrid, was painted by Picasso in 1937 for the Spanish pavilion at the Universal Exhibition in Paris. As you will know, it deals with an episode in the period that led up to the Second World War. On 26 April 1937, German aircraft of the Legión Condor, supporting Franco, bombed the Basque capital, Guernica, and its civilian population for three hours. This event, and the reports and photographs that appeared in *Çe Soir* and *L'Humanité*, led Picasso to abandon his more personal plans for the

[1] *Le Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, Paris 1907-15, reprinted 1955, vol. 2, pp. 110-111.

decoration of the Spanish pavilion, and to turn it into a public testimony. But what is it that Picasso testifies to?

We shall return to the theme of the Borgo fire, and to the theme of Guernica, at the end; and you will see that there are some remarkable correspondences and contrasts between the two paintings.

I. Preamble

To see concrete contrasts and correspondences between these two paintings, or even to analyse them in a similar way, is by no means an easy matter; they seem to our minds so utterly alien to each other. So we shall have to take our time, approach the paintings slowly, and work our way into them. I shall begin by reminding you of the basic compositional requirements that applied both to Raphael and to Picasso, and by comparing the ways in which these requirements are satisfied in the two paintings. In the process, in doing this, I shall have to touch on some matters that I shall discuss in greater detail under the headings of invention and composition, structure, figuration and *ordo*.

The basics of composition, which were already valid for Alberti, are the following:

Painting has as its object the things which exist in reality, and which are, or can be made, visible.

For the painter, the order that governs this object in reality is the spatial order: the order of the extent (the spatia) of the places that things occupy (above the earth, in the atmosphere) and of the distances between them.

The method of interpreting these things, in the order that governs them in reality, is based on comparison.

We now have paintings and not reality before us, and we proceed in reverse order: we characterise what is represented in terms of its reality.

Both Raphael and Picasso have represented things: both painters have made things visible.

What are the visible things in Raphael's painting? Raphael has represented human beings, naked and clothed; vessels; architecture in the form of

facades and perspectival views, with rustications, orders, entrances, windows and ornamental mosaics, a square with a patterned pavement, steps and stairs; finally fire and smoke and the effect of the wind on hair and clothing. The human beings are in, by and on the buildings, the square, the steps and the stairs.

All the human beings, if we now look at Raphael's figures, are doing something. The bodies are consistently worked out from head to foot; bones, muscles and skin are distinguished, and the bodies are subject to a powerful tension, both physical and mental. The bodies are rounded out towards us, and we do not simply see but sense their strength.

As for the relationships between the people, all of them are involved in extended spatial complexes of action and attention.

In structural terms, there are other relationships that link the architectural forms with each other and with the light, which falls from the right-hand side.

All the forms are related and contrasted on a number of levels: in physical bulk and texture; in movement, as governed by axis and centre of gravity; in the physical movements that express mental movements; in relation to locality and light; and in their actions. On all these levels, each stands both for itself and in relation to others. Through this finely graded and equal elaboration of forms, Raphael has contrived to have both people and things standing before him, and before the viewer, like the things of reality, which can be judged from multiple, shifting viewpoints and not all at once. He has, if you like, achieved a high degree of objectivity.

What are the visible things in Picasso's painting? Picasso too has represented people, but also animals (a bull, a bird, a horse) and a flower; a cellar or basement, house walls with windows, portions of roofs, a tiled floor with an arrow to point the way; also a table, a lamp, a ceiling light, pieces of armour, broken weapons, light and flames.

Clearly, Picasso has made people and animals visible to us in a very different way. Look at the woman who runs in from the right; look at her figure: the right foot, resting on a sharp edge, heel firmly planted and toes outspread; the tension in the calf, the right arm and thumb stretching down; the angling of the compactly aligned fingers; the stretching of the neck, the chin stretched out and upraised, the opening of the mouth, the retention of both upraised eyes; the rounded buttocks; the tensed thigh; the left arm stretched out behind, and the hand with the fingers arched back and spread wide; the left leg with its knee pressed against the floor, and the left foot resting on the tips of its splayed toes.

Or, in more general terms, with reference to the structure: Picasso has made visible the movements, twists and turns, expansions, above all elongations of the forms, and has stepped up the tension to an extreme, above all in the expression of pain and grief by such figures as are not wounded, dismembered or dead. By emphasising the extremities of the bodies - feet, hands and head, also breasts and buttocks - Picasso has imposed a single mode of vision on all of them, and has given them expressive intensity in terms of that single mode of vision.

Similarly, the architectural forms present no autonomous plane of coherence or existence in their own right; nor does the light towards which the figures stretch, or into which they have found their way. Above all, there is no self-sufficient, consistent action.

Picasso, too, as we can see, has made things from reality visible, but without Raphael's multiplicity of levels of judgement and levels of inner autonomy: all are pressed into the service of a specific mode of vision. And Picasso has taken this specific and, if you like, emphatically subjective mode of vision - in which the figures are trapped and contained, and into which the viewer enters with conviction - and has used it to proclaim a truth.

The figures, as you can see, are principally defined by the lines of external and internal contours - lines, which indicate both the edges of the volumes, and the force that stretches them taut. The convex arching lines on the picture surface make the figures bulge massively toward each other; but there is no modelling to give them any projection towards the viewer. The result is that the viewer sees their massiveness in relation to each other but does not feel this mass to be directed towards him; the figures are therefore simply visible.

This too holds them within the mode of vision established by the artist: as if within his stream of consciousness, perhaps.

Both Raphael and Picasso have organised the object of their paintings spatially, through the extent of the spaces that things occupy (in the atmosphere), and of the distances between them.

Raphael has filled the surface of the painting, and the illusive pictorial space, with figures and architectural forms: only the middle ground between left and right, between top and bottom, between near and far, is open. He starts out by using the figures in each of the three dimensions in turn to mark out three places or zones: left, middle and right; near, middle and far; bottom, middle and

top. The figures also exist in similar dimensions: they lower themselves; they reach down or up; they gesture, look or walk upward; they walk and turn to left or right and away from or towards the viewer.

Raphael has made his forms, both human and architectural, define localities which differ widely in spatial quality: compact and stable, in the large Aeneas group on the left; social and assembling, in the large central group; separated and dispersing, in the three women on the right; loose and sequentially receding, in the central space of the picture; emphatically rounded and physical, firm as a pillar, in the woman carrying water on the right.

The dimension of near and far is certainly as important in this painting as that of left and right: the fire is some way off on the left; the walls, the figures on them and the colonnade recede away from us; the facade of Old St Peter's is in the distance; the buildings on the right come very solidly into the foreground, and on the extreme right a flight of steps rises close against the picture plane.

So much, initially, for Raphael's ordering of space.

As for Picasso: Picasso in this painting has filled the surface and the space with a small number of large figures of human beings and animals, with even density, without the breathing space offered by a contrast between vacancy and fullness.

The painting itself, as I remember it, has more air and depth than any of its reproductions, thanks to the artist's use of blue (together with white, black and grey). Picasso has brought all the figures close up to us. He has conscientiously created spatial recession, and the bull is behind the mother and child, the table stretches backwards, the horse's rump expands; but the woman who falls is simply projected against the house. There is no essential and coherent development in terms of near and far. All that happens is tight and close.

Picasso's forms define the left and right halves of the painting, but in spatial terms there is no centre. The action does have a centre, namely the horse with its gaping wound beneath the electric light; but this horse belongs to the lefthand half. Picasso has formed two units, juxtaposed and interlocking, out of groups and figures that are either isolated from each other, or extensively interpenetrate each other, or reach out towards each other.

The third dimension, that of above and below, is also important. Picasso has also created a deep, intermediate layer of forms, with the dead warrior as a base below, and the ceiling with its electric light and the flames above. This dimension, too, like that of left and right, is embodied and realised through the

figures: the bull with his horns and tail, the horse as it falls and arches its neck up and back, the woman who enters and lunges forward on one knee, and the woman on the far right, stretching up her arms as she falls.

So much, initially, for Picasso's ordering of space.

Both Raphael and Picasso have made a methodical use of comparison to comprehend objects in their spatial ordering in reality and have presented them in relation and proportion to each other.

This process of comparison has been applied to the relationships within each object - its proportions in the narrower sense - and also to the external proportions of objects in terms of similarity, dissimilarity and contrast (*similia, dissimilia et contraria*). This process of comparison corresponds to the critical reaction on the viewer's part, which is implicit in the picture. Comparison has always been valid as a generalised method of reading a picture: it applies to near and far, left and right, above and below, large and small, central and peripheral, woman and man, mother and child, person and animal, and so on. At this point I shall select just two elements in each painting for further discussion.

Raphael: comparison reveals distinctions and similarities, as already mentioned, in the architectural forms. The architecture on the left recedes into the distance, both walls and colonnade; in the spaces thus created we see fire and flight; the recession of the architecture is there, but it is also interrupted by fire and flight. The architectural forms on the right, by contrast, are solid, angular projections, both the Pope's house and the citizens' house; and so the place where the Pope gives his blessing and the place where the fire is being extinguished resemble each other and stand opposite the place of fire and flight. Furthermore, the Pope's house, which is not only solid and angular but has a symmetrical facade with projections, resembles the facade of Old St Peter's which can be seen further off; and so the Pope's benediction loggia is referred back to St Peter's, and the figure of Leo IV giving his blessing from his Bramantian window (or *Serliana*) is referred back to the figure of St Peter himself, in his *mandorla* on the facade mosaic. The place and the man are thus related to the power of his blessing.

Comparison also shows similarities and differences among the human individuals, and I shall single out one of them. Whereas all the other human figures, children excepted, are clothed - and the mother who hastens into the centre from the right even carries an additional garment over her arm - the male figures

in the first group on the left are of an antique and exotic nudity. These are very different people from all the others. They are Aeneas, his father Anchises, Ascanius with the household gods in a chest, and perhaps a nurse (her age indicates that she is not Creusa). What are they doing here?

The wall, for Raphael, marks a conspicuous transition from nude to draped figures, from the extraordinary to the ordinary: one youth nude, then the mother indoors, also nude, the father outside, fully clothed; the youth is in such haste that he has presumably had no time to dress. All this is quite different from the calm, antique nudity of the group of identifiable heroes who step out into the square on the left.

Picasso: the comparative principle is based on similarity, dissimilarity and contrast. Picasso has clearly introduced extremes of contrast into this scene, uniting figures and spaces that, in normal experience, are irreconcilable; and I shall limit myself to these.

In the immediate foreground are the dismembered fragments of an armed warrior. They are spread out, disconcertingly, in the form of a recumbent figure. And then, in a way that is unexpected in view of the time and place, a bull is juxtaposed with the figures of a human mother and her child.

The spatial content is also notoriously unsettling. The figures are in a long, low room, stretching from left to right, with a tiled floor, a door on the left, a table on the left and a ceiling light towards the centre. It is a kind of cellar, rather like the air-raid shelters of a few years later; but then we see, as if inside the room, two house-fronts on the right and a roof. We also see that a woman, leaning out of one of these houses, is unexpectedly thrusting a lamp into this brightly lit cellar - lamp against lamp - in order to see what is going on inside.

Picasso has thus deliberately steered us away from customary experience in four ways: our normal expectations are shattered by the armed man; in the bull group they are raised into a mythical realm; in the lamp next to the lamp, the light from outside must have an allegorical meaning, an additional light that heightens and intensifies normal vision; and a cellar like a townscape, and a townscape like a roofed-over cellar, conveys the intensified experience of the bombing of Guernica

II. Invention and Composition

In setting out the three preconditions of composition - things and their visibility; their spatial ordering; and the method of comparison - and showing how they are fulfilled in the two paintings by Picasso and by Raphael, I have already introduced the topics that I shall now discuss in detail: 'Invention and Composition', at first 'Figure and Motif', then 'Structure, *Ordo* and Theme'. To avoid going too far beyond the time allotted to me, and because here my memories are not clear enough, I shall leave *chiaroscuro* and colour out of consideration.

1 Figure and Motif

Raphael's and Picasso's sources, namely the *Liber pontificalis* in one case and *Çe Soir* and *L'Humanitè* in the other, together with the earlier works of art known to them and the experiences of their own lives, supplied the material in which they found the human and architectural motifs which they made into figurations.

The motifs that Raphael has devised include the following: the Pope, standing in an upper window, backed by his entourage and giving his blessing; the kneeling woman who turns towards him, with the lower part of her body stooped forward and her arms thrown up to hail him; the woman who looks towards the Pope and leans to one side to lay a supporting hand on her child's back and to lead him by his hands, together with the kneeling, praying child whom the mother supports and leads; the woman who climbs the steps in the square towards the Pope, raising her hand to greet him, together with the child whom she leads by the hand and who looks up at her; the woman at the foot of the loggia with her hands raised in prayer. Other motifs are the shivering, fearful, naked children who hasten forward while looking back at their mother, who urges them on with a protective gesture, hastily dressed, an outer garment over her arm, her skirts trailing on the ground; and the equally varied motifs of the quenching of the fire, five of them in all. Other motifs are of flight, and of people who save the aged and children and themselves; and there are several more

besides: above all the woman who sits on her heels on the floor, sheltering the child in her lap, and looks round at something in surprise and trepidation, with the child who looks alertly about him from his safe position between his mother's legs.

These motifs are, as I have said, figurations. That is to say: the motif, with its wealth of details which the description can only suggest, and which give it its density, appears in one place, as a unity, autonomous and distinct from others, whether it is an individual figure or as a group; and this motif with its characteristics is started, worked out and finished within the individual figure or group.

This sort of figuration can exist on several levels; and this is the case with the Aeneas group. First the son, a powerful figure with legs spread wide and - as can be seen from Raphael's autograph study (RZ IX, 422[2], fig. 46) - delighting in his task. He lifts his crippled father onto his back by grasping his right leg with his right arm and hand, and passing his left arm under his father's left thigh to grasp the right wrist which hangs down over his own shoulder. Then the father, who leans his weight on the son's back and across his right shoulder and grasps the son's left shoulder in his own left hand and - as the study also shows - leans his head cheerfully towards his son's. This is a group in its own right: autonomous, balanced in terms (for instance) of open and closed form, clearly demarcated from neighbouring forms. It is started, worked out and finished as a separate unit. This group is a *figura* of the *pietas* of Aeneas: the firm and goodnatured steadfastness of the son and the trusting affection of the father.

Raphael then expands this group to include the grandson who steps out, symmetrically, at his father's side - and optically ahead of him - looking back, clasping the chest of household gods in his arms. The three together are a *figura* of the union of generations, of the *pietas* inspired by the family gods and shared by the grandson; they are also a *figura* of departure, as Ascanius extends Aeneas' static pose into a stride outlined against the corner of the wall. Aeneas, Anchises and Ascanius also combine to form a group: autonomous, balanced and clearly demarcated from neighbouring forms; started, worked out and finished as a separate unit, it is rounded out and completed in the figure of Ascanius.

---

[2] Numbers prefixed with RZ refer to *Raphaels Zeichnungen*, ed. by Oskar Fischel and Konrad Oberhuber, Berlin 1913 sqq., vol. 9, Berlin 1972, henceforth RZ IX and the specific catalogue number.

Raphael then extends this group yet again to include the woman who emerges behind them, markedly more distanced, looking over her shoulder and upwards, past Anchises' son and grandson. Observed by Ascanius, she sees something, but what she sees - perhaps a vision of Rome - remains unstated. All four together form the group in its fullest form; they constitute a figuration that is extended beyond itself by the woman's prophetic gaze. The woman emerges, Aeneas stands, and Ascanius steps out: three stages in the escape, heavily burdened, from a burning city.

In the large Aeneas group I have described a specific type of figuration: that of an expanded group with an additional figure behind. And this is the model according to which, if we were to follow and understand Raphael, the meaning embodied in the group should be interpreted. Other types of figuration include the single figure; the simple group; the divided group, as in the group of people praying at the foot of the benediction loggia; and the central figure flanked by escorts, as in the Pope in his loggia. Raphael is particularly rich in the invention of types of belonging, togetherness, human fellowship.

I now turn to Picasso. He too has found motifs - human, animal and architectural or otherwise inanimate - and has made them into figurations. In this connection, we have already looked at the woman who rushes in. Her breasts have been stopped up with nails, and she raises her face to the light and to the lamp; for her children are no more.

What other kinds of motifs are there, and how are they figured? One figuration consists of a house and a woman: a rising gable wall, pierced by a door and window, an expanse of roof, and the woman whose breasts have turned to thorns that point inward and outward, her left hand pressed between them with fingers splayed, her head and neck sweeping down in a curve that ends at the point of her chin, the right arm that shoots out along the roof to clasp, tight and firm, the base of a lamp; with bated breath, parted lips and sidelong stare, she sees what happens before her.

Another figuration consists of the horse, which jerks back with splayed rump and flying tail, trying to support itself on its back legs as its right hinder hoof crumples. Its massive body bears a great, gaping, diamond-shaped wound; it is pierced by the shaft of a lance and by a small wound that closes itself round a splinter. Its forelegs fly out and it stumbles forward onto the knee joint of its right foreleg; above its rounded prow of a chest it casts back its head and neck, stares upward with ears erect and, with nostrils distended, crooked-gaping mouth and darting tongue, it screams.

Picasso has mostly kept to individual figures in this painting, but there is one group, and this is an extended one: the group of the mother with her dead child, extended to include the bull. The mother is on the ground, the child's chest and neck in the crook of her right arm; the child's head hangs back so that its nose points downward. Fingers splayed, the mother's right hand supports its body, draped with a band on the left, a napkin on the right; one finger touches her own nipple. The child's little garment, pulled taut, and its legs with their pathetic outturned toes, hang down in front of her body; the woman extends her left hand out and down, its fingers outspread in helpless lamentation. Above the cleft of her breasts, she stretches her neck, lays back her head, and laments, with pointed tongue, to high heaven. That is the group, in which the child is part of the woman.

Now for the extension. Behind her, side-on, is the bull. Tail flaring, he swivels his head and neck towards our left; his head is immediately above that of the woman, whom he guards, and whose lament rises to him and far past him. With ears extended, horns fiercely bent, nostrils aflare, tongue sharp, the bull looks ahead and to the side: her companion and protector, in powerless rage.

Picasso's highly expressive motifs, like those of Raphael, are figurations. Here, again, the motif appears at one place in a unity distinct from others, the unity of the individual figure or of the group. The figures are expressive by virtue of the fact that all the traits within each motif are so selected as to lead in one direction; they are selected to this end, and the beginning, middle and end of every movement or outreach on the part of the figures is expressively intensified (in the case of the woman who rushes in, this applies to her feet, knee, chin and hands). Each motif is defined, as in Raphael, by being started, worked out, and finished. That of the woman with the lamp, for instance, is started in the setting of the gable-end and window, with her breasts and the hand that rests between them; it is worked out in the agitation of head and arm; and it is finished, at rest again, in the hand and lamp. (Picasso worked out his figures and groups, and also the terminations of the figures - such as the horse's head - in separate drawings.) Here, too, the figuration consequently appears articulated, concentrated, and compactly rounded.

There is one noteworthy difference between the two ways in which the two painters invent and figure their motifs. Raphael has figured a number of similar motifs - think of the sequence of women who all turn towards the Pope, one who kneels with hands raised, one looking down at her child, one holding her child's hand and waving, one praying - and the resulting variations lend the

motif a certain breadth and weight and attune the viewer to a corresponding mood. Picasso, by contrast, uses his few figurations in harsh juxtaposition and contrast. But this brings us to the issue of the arrangement in which the figurations appear - the issue of *ordo* and theme - and first we need to establish the distinction between the structure and the *ordo* of a composition.

2 Structure, *Ordo* and Theme

There are two distinct ways of assessing a composition as a whole; this is a distinction that, as we have seen, dates back to Alberti.

One form of assessment treats the composition as a structure, and its verdict is as follows. In Raphael's painting, all the figurations, human and architectural, have great plasticity; this lends a consistent plasticity to the whole picture. In Picasso's painting, all the figurations of human beings and animals have massive power in relation to each other and very little plasticity in relation to us, and this makes for consistency in the pure visibility of always powerful figures.

It emerges from the same form of assessment that everywhere in Raphael's painting there is agitation and repose, of body and soul; and that everywhere in Picasso's painting there is figurative action, extension and expression, and that the image as a whole has a figurative coherence, clarity and compact forcefulness. Again, this form of assessment reveals that all the figures in Raphael's painting participate in a shared action, and all those in Picasso's painting in a shared event, elaborately balanced; and that both paintings, Picasso's as well as Raphael's, manifest great inevitability and tranquillity, however agitated and disturbing the action in one case and the event in the other. Such an assessment of composition as structure treats the work as a whole, all the parts of which can be taken in simultaneously.

Alongside this assessment of composition as structure, as seen in plasticity, movement and event, there is an alternative assessment, and it is to this that I now turn; the assessment of composition as disposition or sequence. This traces the sequence of the figured motifs, the figurations or groups, which coexist with the simultaneous structure, and assesses them as a rational, successive process, systematically set in train by the artist.

With Raphael we began by looking at the sequence of the women looking at the Pope, one kneeling with hands raised, one leaning down to show her child what is happening, one holding her child's hand and waving, and one praying. The first two, kneeling and leaning, form part of a larger unit; the last, the praying figure, aligns herself with the kneeling group at the base of the benediction loggia. This sequence of figures, with its loose rhythm, does not unfold in a straightforward way: between the two closest to us, and also between the two furthest from us, Raphael interposes figures who face back in the opposite direction. The first sequence, that of stretching upward and showing, is set off by an interposed shy, astonished look directed at others; the second sequence, that of waving and praying, is set off by an interposed figure who half-turns towards us with open arms. By facing towards us, both these interposed figures anticipate and prepare the Papal benediction that closes the sequence. Raphael has characterised the sequence through a limited range of figure and motif variations, and he leads it from darkness into brightness, from densely to loosely packed figures, from heaviness to lightness, from lower to higher: this is the women's path to the blessing which returns and operates along a parallel path.

This temperate use of variation is all the more evident by contrast with the other sequence of strongly differentiated groups and figures, on the left: there the large Aeneas group, which was intended (according to the study) to be centred on the joyous mutual affection of father and son, is followed abruptly by the contrasting figure of the youth who dangles from the wall in panic-stricken haste (see Raphael's study, RZ IX, 423, fig. 47); above him red and black flames and smoke billow over the top of the wall. Another sharp break, and change of mood, shows us a father who stands fully dressed on the ground and stretches upwards, and a mother who leans over the wall, naked, with smoke billowing over her, and is about to drop her swaddled child into his arms; what will become of her, no one can tell. These figures, with the sharp recession of the wall before them and the clear scansion of the colonnade behind them, embody a totally different and more forceful rhythm in which the themes are flight, safety and danger. At the same time, the youth and the family - saving oneself, saving one's child, facing death - provide a gloss on the preceding Aeneas group, and also a reversal of it.

The main sequence of groups and figures proceeds to the right from the Aeneas group, along its presumed path, into the centre; the youth and the family on the wall branch off from this sequence as a diversion. In the centre, another diversion begins after the kneeling figure of the first woman in the sequence of

those who turn to face the Pope. The woman who sits on the floor and looks in amazement at Aeneas (while her child looks the other way), and the woman who leans down to her child and looks at the Pope (her child looking in the same direction), represent two extremes, back to back (see Raphael's study, RZ IX, 425, fig. 48). I shall return to the thematic significance of these back-to-back extremes.

The central portion of the painting terminates, on the right-hand side, with the woman who drives her cold and frightened children forward towards the other women and mothers. The perspective makes her appear to shield her children from burning rafters. She resembles the woman praying in the distance, who terminates the diversionary line of women, and who shares her forward impulse. The grand style of her figure and costume clearly shows her origin in the figures on the right; she moves in the direction marked by the woman who has caught sight of Aeneas, and towards Aeneas himself; but she too seems to be fleeing. What is the significance of this new reinterpretation and reversal of the direction of flight?

I shall start by pointing to the symmetrical disposition of the numbers of figures. The left-hand half of the composition contains four in the Aeneas group, four more in the figures on the wall: eight in all. The women and children, gathered and gathering in the centre, form another group of eight. In the middle of the square are another four conspicuous figures, and the conspicuous figures at the top - the Pope, St Peter and his two attendant donors - make another four; so this might be counted as another eight. In the last section, on the right, the major figures number five, exceptional in their foreground vertical arrangement - unless, that is, we add to them the physically and visually related group of the woman with two children, in which case there are once more eight. If this is so, the group of the woman with two children make a fundamental and surprising breach in the order, by belonging both to the centre and the right-hand part of the picture, detaching themselves from the right-hand group to complete the central group. That is the interpretation that I would suggest.

It would be in keeping with this, that the spatial arrangement of the figures in the right-hand section takes place on axes that intersect each other: one axis passing from the woman with the children, who proceeds along this axis with her garments trailing behind her, to the partly obscured man at the extreme right; the other axis from the figures lifting water vessels, a little further off, to the young woman who carries a jar of water in the right foreground. On the right, therefore, we should see the mother, ushering her children out of harm's

way, and beside and behind them a variety of efforts to put the fire out. This would represent another junction between the major left-right axis and a diversion into deep space. It would correspond to the group of the first two women who face the Pope, but without the interposed figure who represents a potential brake on the action. And so the content of each axis is of equal weight and forms a cross. And so the mother's movement, and her gesture of driving her children before her, comes to represent something other than flight.

There are other contrasts, too: the figure of the woman who stands a little way back, lifting vessels to put out the fire, corresponds to and contrasts with that of the father waiting to catch his child, on the left; again, the figure of the youth above her corresponds similarly to the bending, reaching pose of the mother with the baby on the left: and the last figure on the right holds up her jar just as her counterpart on the left, Aeneas, holds up his father.

It is worth adding, at this stage, that the left-hand part of the painting is unequivocally about fire and flight, danger to life and the saving of life; the central part is unequivocally about the appeal to the Pope and his answering blessing; which he directs towards the fire on the left; and the third, right-hand section is unequivocally about putting the fire out. The sections are linked by two more complicated groups: that of the woman who urges her two children forward, and that of the woman seated on the ground with one child. It seems clear that the overall arrangement has a meaning, but only if understood in this way: that the topic is first fire and flight, danger and rescue, then the papal blessing, then the quenching of the flames. What would be the point of the Pope's blessing after the fire had been put out? And what would be the point of flight and fire after the blessing, supposing that the blessing works? Interpreted from left to right, the whole represents a story; the narration of a *storia*.

We now know the story as revealed by the elucidation of the *ordo*, the sequence of groups and figures; and now we can define their theme.

The theme of the Pope's blessing, and the faith shown in him by the mothers and children, has two aspects. One of these is surprising enough in itself: Raphael does not show the fire being extinguished by the blessing of Pope Leo IV. The element does not miraculously yield: indeed, it burns most fiercely in the direction in which he faces. What follows the blessing is the activity of fire fighting, and this is taking place without reference to the Pope, and without any orders from him. Those who are fighting the fire are arrayed along a spatial axis that, if produced, would lead to the Pope; but it is not a sight line. The burning building intervenes. The Pope's standing and blessing presence in the

loggia, which relates directly to the presence of St Peter himself on the facade of his church - there are thus two central figures here, one long-present, one currently present - is juxtaposed with the fire-fighting activity of people who rely on their own efforts. But this is an activity that runs parallel to the faith of the mothers and children and cuts across the direction of the efforts to flee to safety. In the left-hand section, the young, the old, and mature men are fleeing; in the right-hand section a mother brings out her children, and old and young men and women are putting out the flames. The rounded, pillar-like figure of the young woman who rounds off the composition on the right, striding into action with a jar on her head and another in her hand, is a *figura* of the triumph of active self-reliance. Raphael makes her a true counterpart and pendant for Aeneas. The degree of artistic reference inherent in this woman, exceptional in the context of this picture, lifts her out of the context of the action, like Diogenes in *The School of Athens* (figs. 18 and 22) and Heliodorus in *The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple* (fig. 36). Emphatically, she embodies what she is doing. She induces the viewer - who cannot see for himself that the fire will be defeated - to have confidence and be convinced that all will be well.

The second part of the theme is still more striking: it is tied to Aeneas, and to the fact that it is Rome that is burning. Aeneas leaves a ruined arch behind him, with flames beneath it; the Pope has an arch above him, beneath which his blessing is given. In *The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple*, Raphael had made a powerful use of anachronism by bringing in a Pope in his *sedia gestatoria* to stand by the High Priest of the Old Dispensation in his hour of need: although his help was not required. Here, equally surprisingly, we find the family of Aeneas. Aeneas flees from a burning city for a second time, but this time the city is the Rome that he himself founded; and that is what the mother seated on the ground is disconcerted to realise. Her neighbour, behind her back, is looking at the Pope: the blessing of Leo IV, buttressed by the authority of St Peter and the new *pietas* of the women and mothers who look to the Pope, is what makes possible the rescue of the children and the energetic, autonomous action of fire-fighting that is performed by the men and women. No need for Aeneas to flee; no need to found another city. No need to flee - where? To the Pillars of Hercules? Or beyond?

I now turn to the *ordo* and the theme of Guernica. The composition has, as you know, already been likened to a triptych. This is not entirely wrong, in the sense that this composition - like Raphael's, by the way - is in three parts: the lateral sections, with the bull family and the woman falling from the house,

are symmetrical with each other, and are composed in such a way that each seems concentrated within itself. It is wrong, however, in the sense that these sections are not autonomous or self-contained but are very clearly overlapped and intersected: by the hand, arm and head of the warrior on the left and by the knee, shin and foot of the woman who runs in at the right. They appear to left and right of the central section, but they do not flank it: they are beyond it. This has to be clearly visualised in understanding the work.

There is one more way in which the right-hand side and the centre overlap. The woman who runs in with upturned face on the right echoes the lamenting mother with upturned face on the far left; and the woman who reaches out leftward, and her lamp, corresponds to the bull who wheels round leftward, and to his tail; the woman who hurtles to her death thus corresponds to the dead child. One might say, therefore, that the group on the left united by death, lamentation and rage, corresponds to the light-seeking, light-bringing, hurtling, centripetal and centrifugal group on the right; and one might detect, as in Raphael, the displacement of what belongs to the right-hand side into the centre. How desolate the cry of the woman who falls; and, by comparison with the mother on the left, how lost in a void!

I shall now trace the *ordo* of the composition, as I understand it. In the foreground, Picasso has placed a fallen warrior, on his back. The composition as a whole starts off with that warrior's open left hand as it lies palm upwards, in a gesture of surrender, with its forearm and the helmet-head (a unit consisting of helmet and head) which lies facing upward and to one side, eyes twisted, breath spent; and, without a shoulder or upper arm, a little way further to the right, the right forearm and hand, grasping the hilt of a broken sword; from it grows a plant, already noticed by other observers as a last sign of hope.

On the far side of the starting-point - or, to be more precise, above the helpless arm and hand - the woman cradles her dead child; and above the head and arm of the dead warrior the bull looms up behind the woman and child. Death and lamentation, in the child and the mother, and impotent fury in the bull, who with his alert ears, menacing horns, darting tongue, flame-like tail, trembles with rage but can do nothing: a mythological figure of Spain, or else of the man, Spaniard or Basque, who is the mate and protector of woman and child. Next to him is a table, onto which a bird tumbles with a cry, as if shot out of the air.

Why does the bull tremble with rage? What is it that the bull cannot do? He cannot gore the adversary, the cause of the child's death and the woman's

lamentation, and toss him over his back, as in a *corrida*: the adversary is not to be seen and not to be reached. As we know, that adversary flies in planes and drops bombs. The bull looks round, but he can discern nothing; he can only prick up his ears and listen. A roof is over his head, and - as the rest of the composition shows - over the entire city. There is no getting out.

Death, lamentation and impotence all spring - as Picasso has clearly shown - from the death of the chivalrous warrior who lies dismembered, his weapon shattered, beside and beneath his horse. Appended to this central event, on the left, is the family with the bull. Compare them for a moment with Raphael's family of Aeneas, also on the left of the picture; and compare the dying bird with the swaddled child that is to be dropped to safety.

To continue with the *ordo* of the composition. We have seen the warrior's hand, arm, head and, after an interval, arm, hand, flower and sword; and now again we see, starting from the warrior's neck, above his sword-bearing arm, slumping to the ground above his wrist and reaching out over his hand, tied to him and extending beyond him, his horse; its wound, its collapse and its animal cry convey not death but the act of dying. In the left-hand part of this same figuration, the great wound appears directly above a splintered lance; and the head and the cry and the cellar light and the lamp are likened and juxtaposed. The animals, bull and horse, also form a spatial sequence: impotent rage and helpless collapse. The dying of this horse is the climax of the action that Picasso has presented to us.

The main movement has hitherto been towards the right; the next two figures follow counter-movements to the left. The woman who staggers in, breasts nailed, sinking to her knees, nevertheless cranes up into the light, without seeing anything but the light itself. Above her, the woman with her hand between her thorn-pierced breasts leans out and thrusts forward a lamp, and sees the dying of the warrior's horse: sees it with such intensity as to show it. It is possible to look at a thing so attentively that everyone turns to see it.

Behind these women's backs, and further from us than the one who rushes in, there is one last woman, alone, who hurtles down the façade of a blazing building, arms raised, eyes rolling, screaming. Her skirt is on fire; the lower part of her body is thrust sideways as if by blast.

In this right-hand half of the painting, Picasso shows only women. Their children, as the nailed breasts show, are dead; and never again will they find their champion, man: he lies butchered, and his horse is dying.

The figures of the two women to the right of the horse are of great importance, and they have the weight of a second main section of the composition. Vying with each other in intensity, reaching up into the light and casting light, seeing the situation and showing it by seeing, they provide the testimony that establishes the truth of the event so that it can never be lost, and so that it can serve as a warning. Think of the contrast between the woman with the lamp, who looks and shows, and the impotently raging bull. - Both women move in a single direction, to the left. The person who presents all this to us, Picasso, has used them to turn the rightward flow of his presentation back towards the left, and back towards the matter to which they testify; then, on the right, he brings the matter to a conclusion.

I have traced the disposition of the figured motifs, the sequences of the figures and groups, the *ordo* of the composition, as I see it. I should like to ask you to consider it. To consider whether there is a right direction in which to read the picture, a set sequence of figures; whether, for instance, a family's death, lamentation and rage make sense after one woman's lonely fall to her death, or whether they should not be seen and understood before it. I ask you above all to consider just how much we depend, for our understanding of Picasso's verdict on events in Guernica, on having the witnesses who see and show in the right place. If we were to treat them as the concluding part of the painting, then they would make a preserving, commemorating - and in this sense also a consoling - conclusion; but if we were to follow Picasso himself, as I interpret his intentions, this testimony would be forcefully proclaimed immediately after the climax, and the action would conclude with the fall of the burning woman from the burning house. It would end with downfall, and that downfall would remain, in the light of the painting's testimony, truly a downfall.

For a moment, let us compare the right-hand section of Picasso's composition with the right-hand section of Raphael's. There is a burning house in both, but where one has death the other has fire-fighting; compare, too, Picasso's woman who rushes in, and the seeing witness above, with Raphael's woman who hurries her children along, and the burning rafters above her. Compare the triangular cohesion of the figures in the centre of both paintings; and notice, perhaps with surprise, the parallel between St Peter and the living Pope, in one composition, and that between the ceiling light and the light that has just been brought in, in the other. In Picasso's *Guernica*, no Pope and no St Peter can bring salvation; in their place there is only light, and light again, by which to see, to show, to bear witness.

Picasso's theme in this work was the new nature of war, with its aerial bombardment of cities, as it was manifest to him in the attack by the German Legion on the Basque city in April 1937, less than two and a half years before other German legions marched into Poland. Death, lamentation, impotence; annihilation and the agony of dying for the knightly champion and his horse, those *figurae* of manly and martial *virtù* across the centuries; the seeing and showing witness to all this; and the reality of death by fire in a blazing city.

May I remind you that it was not my primary intention, today, to explain paintings, but to speak of the history of composition as a topic, and to give an exposition and an example of compositional analysis by figure and motif, *ordo* and theme, *et cetera*, as an art-historical method. Perhaps it has been useful, in this connection, to juxtapose a work of the Renaissance with a modern work, in order to show that it was not only in the Renaissance that composition was part of the reality of art, but that compositional analysis should form part of our understanding of a modern work as well.

The essence of the thoughts I have been presenting to you lies in my emphasis - derived from an idea of Kurt Badt's - on the *ordo*, the sequence of figures and groups, the sequence of figured motifs, and thus on a quality of succession in the ordering of the picture[3], something that makes the organisation of paintings akin to that of works of literature and music. The difference is that in literature and music the parts succeed each other in such a way that what has been said or heard first must have faded before the succeeding words or sounds can be perceived; in painting, however, what precedes and what follows are equally present. In painting, succession takes place in the present: we can remind ourselves of it at any time by looking from one side to the other.

[3] Kurt Badt, *'Modell und Maler' von Jan Vermeer. Probleme der Interpretation*, Cologne 1961; Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus. Beiträge zur Neubegründung einer Historischen Kompositionslehre*, Berlin 1980.

7. On the Classic in the History of Art[1]

You have noticed that I, like many others, do apportion an outstanding rank to artists like Lionardo, Michelangelo and Raphael. I would like to term it 'classic'. In using this term, I probably do refer to a German tradition rather than English one. However, it might indirectly help to differentiate between 'Classic' and 'Classicism'.

I conclude this series of lectures with this topic.

It was during the winter term 1971/72, in a seminar on Raphael's stylistic development, that I first used the word 'classic' in an academic context. It was to be expected that this evaluation of an artist would be little understood and that such assessment of rank hardly be of interest. Times have changed. Although today understanding will still be slight and interest lacking, one is more likely to be misunderstood (and that is worse than not being understood) and must be wary of praise. For I am not concerned with praising the old in order to reinstate 'values'. That is a misunderstanding which destroys a true recognition of what my subject, classic painting, really was: an innovative step forwards which opened up new horizons and included a new conception of what painting could be. I wish to discuss this in four stages. Again, I shall speak primarily of Raphael, though analogous things could be said of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Titian.

Before doing so I should like to make some introductory points: -

1) 'Classic' is a judgement about a work which grants it recognition and status.

---

[1] Translated from the German by Michael Foster. Auf Deutsch: Rudolf Kuhn, "Was ist das Klassische in der Malerei der Hochrenaissance?" *Über das Klassische* hg. Rudolf Bockholdt. Frankfurt 1987, 137-203.

2) Since the judgement is one of stature, in this paper I shall name the aspects which give works the quality necessary to this rank. However, I could not deduct from the works any features whose imitation would allow a classic work to be produced. As used here, 'classic' does not, therefore, denote model character, does not consist of either recipes or a canon of exemplary painters.

3) Since, as we shall see, the judgement concerns intellectual and spiritual stature, I am not in a position to subsume the totality of works in one period or phase of a period under the heading 'classic' and to grant this intelligible form as the expression of an attitude. That is what Heinrich Wölfflin did, under the heading 'Classic Art', for the art of the Florentine and Roman High Renaissance, including Fra Bartolommeo and Andrea del Sarto[2]. The features emphasised by Wölfflin - especially "closed form, tranquillity and solidity" - even contain those which, for me, constitute classic quality.

4) Since the judgement relates to stature, I cannot accept that an artist's themes can produce classic quality. This lay at the root of Kurt Badt's assessment of Nicolas Poussin's classic status, which Badt saw in the combination and unification of Greek and Roman subjects (*physis* and *auctoritas*)[3]. In my opinion, attitudes to, and renewal of, classical subject matter play no part in according 'classic' status.

5) Classic quality is not bound to specific norms, characteristic forms, so-called 'solutions', content or subject matter; it arises from a new way of setting tasks and a new method of representation. 'Method' denotes here the artist's rational 'processes of thought and imagination', his ways of inventing, studying, figuring, arranging and composing.

6) Since the judgement is one of rank, I see no reason to limit the classics in principle to one period or phase of a period or to one group of artists. On the other hand, if other artists are to be accorded classic status it is necessary to demonstrate their comparable quality.

7) In accordance with this, I see no reason for one classic to be regarded as such a complete and exhaustive fulfilment of the art form concerned that each art - music, painting, sculpture, etc. - should be deemed capable of only one classic. The reality of, and ideas about, for example, what constitutes art in painting change too frequently and thoroughly for that.

---

[2] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Die Klassische Kunst. Eine Einführung in die italienische Renaissance* (1898), Basle [8]1949.

[3] Kurt Badt, *Die Kunst des Nicolas Poussin*, Cologne 1969.

8) Finally, for the denotation of 'classic' status I find neither the metaphor of 'maturity' helpful if it arises from botanical ideas and involves a subsequent 'fading', nor that of 'culmination' if it arises from cyclic ideas and involves a subsequent 'falling off'. The kind of painting that followed the classics I shall be discussing here is not described or assessed adequately in terms of these metaphors. I shall be talking of that 'progress' which, I hold, was undoubtedly effected by classic painting in comparison with previous Renaissance painting, a progress which was achieved by a decisive change of direction. This metaphor allows for contemporary and later painters taking slightly or totally different directions.

I shall now explain four features which appear crucial to me. In doing so I am not explaining what a 'classic' is, but what it is in this paintings which should be valued so highly as to make it worthy of classic status.

I

I, 1 The emotional and mental states of human beings are represented as action (agere)

We know that a human being's emotional and mental state can be experienced and recognised by others in the movements of his body. Over and above external appearances, in classic painting emotional and mental states (the 'internal') are made perceptible, methodically and throughout, in body movements (the 'external'). Thanks to articulation and interior differentiation, the movements are generally made consciously and, since they constitute action, are made intentionally. They are thus the expression of mind and will.

As an example I have chosen Raphael's *Tempi Madonna* (fig. 6). Every beholder can experience the emotional life of the two persons as atmosphere or mood. Yet it should not be overlooked that this emotional life is expressed in action - in articulated, differentiated action. Notice how the Madonna moves her forearm up to the child, bends her hand at the wrist, supports the child's back, feels its shoulder with her thumb and holds its side with her fingers, and how she draws the child to her, holding it with her hand. Notice, further, how the child supports itself on its raised arm in order to gaze outwards and how its

mother inclines her head in order to feel the child with her cheek, the side of her nose and her lip. Support, touching and holding, feeling, independence and attachment, tenderness - all is here action and movement, is realised in articulated and differentiated action and movement.

I, 2 The combination of several human beings is also represented throughout as action and, motivated by their actions together and in opposition to each other, is arranged discontinuously.

As an example I have selected the second section of the five-part composition, *The School of Athens* (figs. 17 and 18). This is the complex of figures in front of the left wall, above the flight of steps up to the school building in Athens. An occurrence common in the field of academic work is depicted here: a new theory is advanced and confronted with the arguments of older authors which, as a result of the new theory's qualitative leap forward, become waste paper, something which some colleagues realise quicker than others. All this has become action with spontaneously abrupt changes of direction. Followed by one greeting, a young man runs in with scroll and book under his arm, marking with his fingers the place of the argument he has found and turning abruptly inwards to the next figure, seeking the place where the book will be needed. This next, front-on figure turns abruptly and, with a mocking expression on his face and with his head, arms and hand turned to one side, points out the way to the hurrying young man. A further figure, standing to one side like the remaining ones, turns round abruptly, moving his head, arm and hand out of their frontal position; he answers the greeting of the first man and ushers on the hurrying young man. The three remaining figures - Alcibiades and two others in a row - stand with their backs to the left, expecting nothing from that quarter. They listen. This is a new aspect. The young man is enthusiastic, the second figure sceptical, the third contemplative; but these three just listen. Beyond a further standing figure stands Socrates, seen from the side. Reasoning clearly, he stands in distinct opposition to the listeners and all the others on the left. All the figures act. By running in, letting by, ushering on, turning away and standing in opposition they enact the academic event. They themselves effect the separation and connection, the proximity and distance of their arrangement. The spirit is expression, the expression is action and the human beings' togetherness and opposition creates the discontinuous arrangement.

I, 3

To indicate where this aspect of the total quality worthy of recognition as 'classic' first crystallised, I refer to Raphael's studies for the arrangement of the *Disputa* (fig. 9). Six clearly designated ones have survived for the left half of the terrestrial zone[4]. They show that Raphael only arrived at a discontinuous arrangement in the third study (fig. 13) and at motivating the arrangement out of the actions of the participating figures in the fifth and sixth studies (figs. 15 and 16). A similar process could be demonstrated in the designing of the much smaller *Entombment*[5] altarpiece executed immediately prior to the *Disputa*. Raphael worked it out for himself twice - undoubtedly with reference to his predecessor, Leonardo.

I, 4

To characterise the relation of our example to the theory of art I refer to the differences between Alberti's treatise of 1435 and Leonardo's.[6] Alberti recognised clearly that "movements of the soul are made known by movements of the body"[7] and that painters "wish to represent emotions through the movements of limbs,"[8] knowing that "it is extremely difficult to vary the movements of the body in accordance with the almost infinite number of movements of the heart."[9] Leonardo, seeking absolute clarity, repeated this with an increased number of observations - for instance, "the motions and attitudes of figures should display the true mental state of the moving figure, in so true a way that they cannot signify anything else (*che nissuna altra cosa possino significare*)."[10] Of the arrangement, the sequence of figures, Alberti said the artist must ponder it thoroughly (*excogitare*), clarify its whole and its parts in draw-

---

[4] See Chapter 2.
[5] Rome, Galleria Borghese.
[6] See Chapter 5.
[7] Alberti, *De pictura* II, 41 in: Leon Battista Alberti, *Opere volgari*, ed. Cecil Grayson, Bari, vol. 3 (1973).
[8] Alberti, *De pictura* II, 43.
[9] Alberti, *De pictura* II, 42.
[10] Lionardo, *Das Buch von der Malerei* § 298, in: Lionardo da Vinci, *Das Buch von der Malerei*, ed. by Heinrich Ludwig, vols. 1-3. Vienna 1882 (Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte etc. ed. by Rudolf Eitelberger v. Edelberg), Reprint Osnabrück 1970. Cf. Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting*, translated by A. Philip McMahon, 2 vols., Princeton 1956.

ings (*commentari*), have it well thought-out beforehand (*praemeditari*) and discuss it with friends until he recognises (*intellegere*) that everything has found its optimal place[11]. What he requires is intelligent disposition with regard to arrangement and structure. Alberti's descriptions of the *ordo* in the *Calumny* by Apelles[12] and Botticelli's later depiction of the subject contain a change of direction similar to that I have demonstrated in one part of *The School of Athens*. Yet with Alberti and Botticelli the truth and repentance (*veritas* and *poenitentia*) that follow on calumny's shameful actions are simply lined up next to each other. Alberti's words for this were *adest* and *sequens*.

Alberti spoke of the *chiaroscuro* of each individual figure, Leonardo of the *chiaroscuro* of each individual figure in relation to the objects next to them and the influence these exert on them. This fundamental difference of seeing in terms of relationships can also be found often in paragraphs devoted to action. It is not sufficient to arrange intelligently. Rather, the arrangement must be grounded in the experience and observation of reality, in the study of relationships. The creation of relationships has become representation of reality - that is a qualitative change in concepts of composition.

I cite two characteristic passages. The first enjoins the artist to study reality with regard to relationships and calls this important for composition. In abbreviated form the passage reads thus:

Then observe and sketch briefly...the actions of men as they occur accidentally..., as...when two angry men contend with one another and each one thinks he is in the right...Briefly note the movements and actions of the bystanders and their grouping (conpartitione). This will teach you how to compose narrative paintings (e questo t'insegnera comporre le istorie).[13]

The second passage turns observations on habits into rules which are grounded in the observations themselves. It reads as follows:

Do not mix a number of boys with as many old men, nor young men with infants, nor women with men, unless the situation which you represent requires you to mix them.

Ordinarily, in usual narrative compositions, introduce few old men, and separate them from the young ones, because old men are few and their habits do not agree with those of the young, and where there is no conformity in habits

---

[11] Alberti, *De pictura* III, 61.
[12] Alberti, *De pictura* III, 53.
[13] Lionardo, *Das Buch von der Malerei* § 179; translation by McMahon.

there is no friendship, and where there is no friendship, separation is created, But where, in narrative compositions, there is gravity and men are taking council, introduce few young men because young men deliberately avoid councils and other noble things[14].

II

II, 1 The social, communal reality of human beings' coexistence was Raphael's basic theme.

The series of six arrangement studies for the *Disputa* shows that Raphael found the particular subject matter of the *Disputa* (fig. 15) only at a very late stage. It did not appear until the penultimate study and then only as the motif of one group. Not until the sixth and final study (fig. 16) did it become the underlying theme of all the figures. The particular subject concerns whether it is more appropriate for theologians and the faithful to read holy books or to contemplate the sacrament on the altar - to study or to worship - and with the relation of these two activities to each other. One might well ask what concerned Raphael before he found this subject: why did he execute the previous studies at all, the motifs, poses and movements figure by figure and the relationships of the figures and groups? What was Raphael actually arranging? The question leads one to recognise that Raphael had always been concerned with inventing and arranging figures and groups and that his specific subject matter was always based on a general theme. This theme was to investigate the social, communal reality of human beings' coexistence by means of motifs in which this reality takes on concrete form, to endow these motifs with the greatest possible clarity and concision, to examine the context of the reality and to re-arrange it continually until individuals and communities were thematically, logically and necessarily in the right place. That is why, for Raphael, the shaping of groups and composition were the central tasks of art.

The particular subject of *The School of Athens* (fig. 17) as a whole was the ordering of various kinds of learning and the relationship between learning

---

[14] Lionardo, *Das Buch von der Malerei* §§ 378, 379; translation by McMahon.

and life. The first section (on the left, below the steps) depicts the thirst for, the acquisition, possession and passing on of knowledge, the second section (on the left, above the steps) academic controversy and philosophical discussion. In the third section (in the middle, above the steps) Plato and Aristotle represent free philosophical discourse between equals, which itself is a doctrine for others. The fourth section (on the right, on and above the steps) contains Diogenes' demonstration of the life appropriate to his teachings and a dispute on the respective merits of Diogenes' or Plato's and Aristotle's teachings, while the fifth and final section (on the right, at the foot of the steps) depicts the learning and teaching of knowledge which shapes life.[15] This specific subject matter is based on the general theme mentioned above.

II, 2 Raphael depicted social, communal reality extensively in figures and groups (including types) of community actions.

It is only possible to estimate the richness of what has been observed, differentiated and characterised with regard to the general theme when one arranges them into series. Thus, one can find communal behaviour variously depicted according to age differences in a progression of figures in The School of Athens consisting of the following figures placed at regular intervals and becoming regularly older (fig. 19): the child in the first group at the left; the boy further to the right, next to this group; the youth still further to the right; and the young man standing farther off, in between Alcibiades and Socrates.

One might also compare similar motifs and the different things they give expression to - in the *Disputa*, for instance, the motif of pointing encountered in eleven figures (excluding the angels) or that of amazement encountered in five, and in *The School of Athens* (fig. 17) the various ways of wearing cloaks. One might also compare similar poses and attitudes in the context of the cycles in the *stanze* as a whole, forming series of sitting and reclining, kneeling, standing, walking and running figures.

Especially noteworthy is the variety in the internal organisation of figures and groups. I shall list and characterise some of these from *The School of*

---

[15] Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus. Beiträge zur Neubegründung einer Historischen Kompositionslehre* (Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, ed. Bandmann, Hubala, Schöne vol. 15). Berlin, pp. 74sqq.

Athens, in which fifty-eight figures come together, or separate, to form twenty-two groups and single singles.

First, the single figures:

- half-left in the foreground: turned to the front, independent, inclined invitingly to others;

- to the right of the previous one: self-contained, seated with his block of stone;

- Diogenes, half-right on the steps: offering a frontal view, openly relaxed, seated;

- Socrates, in side-view turned to the left: standing in distinct opposition to the others and expressing himself with clear distinction;

- four further seated figures here and there, plus the statues of Apollo and Athena.

There are three rows: one of three figures, containing Alcibiades, one of five figures, framing Plato and Aristotle on the left, and one of seven, framing them on the right. Near these are two formations of two figures: on the left, that of the figure who, deep in thought and self-contained, approaches the one forming the end of the left-hand row, and, in the corresponding position on the right, the two figures drifting into the distance.

Turning to the groups, there are:

- one of four in the extreme left foreground, held together by the book on top of the base of the column;

- one of two to the right above the steps, consisting of the young man writing intently and the older one inclined towards him;

- a further pair of groups consisting of two equal figures: that of the two young men meeting on the steps and talking about what they have seen and, the most powerful of all, that of Plato and Aristotle.

Finally, there are the two figure complexes: that front left, close, compact and dominated by the central figure of Pythagoras; and that of Euclid front right, relaxed, open, undulating regularly and characterised by free exchange between teachers and pupils. Further means of internal organisation could be adduced from this stanza and the following one.

In all this one thing seems particularly important to me: the varied organisation of figures and groups have been fashioned into the typical. Each figure and group is individual, yet there is no figure or group that is not typical. The type functions as an individual generalisation. Every section of the composition is thus unalterably specific and yet clarified as a whole in such a way that

permits one to speak of a penetrating representation of the overall communal reality. The specific subject, its exposition and narration, is contained in the sequence of figures constituting social, communal reality.

II, 3 Social, communal reality was systematically developed by Raphael in thematic components.

I said that the specific subject matter is contained in the sequence of figures and groups. Even limiting myself to the pictures in the *Stanza della Segnatura*, the structure of the sequences and the relationships of the figures - the social, communal reality - is different in each case.

It is well known that Jurisprudence, represented on the room's narrow side, is depicted differently from the other arts and sciences (fig. 25). The cardinal virtues appear above, beneath the titular representation of Justice on the ceiling. Below them are two acts in the establishment of civil and ecclesiastical law codes: the Emperor Justinian's handing over of the Pandects and Pope Gregory IX's handing over of the Decretals. In these acts of law the legal world itself is in public action, whereas the arts and sciences are present in the community of their authoritative representatives.

These communities each have a different structure. There is even a difference within the *Disputa* between the figures of the celestial and terrestrial spheres. Those of the celestial sphere - Trinity, *Deesis*, putti, angels and representatives of the old and new covenants - are firmly placed in restful relationships, in regular and vivid tranquillity. They experience no dispute, no development, no upheavals; they do not enact a story.

Despite their similar nature, the figures in the terrestrial zone of the *Disputa*, in the *Parnassus* (fig. 24) and *The School of Athens* are each related differently to each other. They react differently to what is above them and, what is more important, to what is placed at their centre. The theologians and the faithful in the *Disputa*, terraced in depth with a marked alternation of figure and group, are governed by the centre, directing each other towards it, pointing it out to each other and moving towards it. Cohesion dominates. In contrast, the philosophers, scientists and artists in *The School of Athens* are more self-sufficient and stay in their places, as is shown by the figure complexes around Pythagoras and Euclid as well as by other figures and groups in the foreground and on the right above the steps. Notice, too, that the sequence starting with the figure running in with book and scroll is brought to a self-contained close by the

figure of Socrates. Independence dominates here. Far from excluding a sudden link (as in the two figures meeting on the steps) or the sudden formation of framing rows (as on either side of Plato and Aristotle), this *emphasis* on independence makes these exceptions appear thematically important. The social, communal reality of the muses and poets in the *Parnassus* lies between the dominance of cohesion in the *Disputa* and the dominance of independence in *The School of Athens*, yet it is still quite distinct. To begin with, the muses and poets remain self-contained as individuals or as groups, with the poets climbing the mountain of Apollo and discussing whether to remain on it or descend from it. Then, however, they turn from their independence, the numerous variations on inclined heads and the movement of their hands creating links with the next single figures and groups. In doing so, they turn towards each other. One might say that they allow indecisive relationships to arise from their independence.

In view of the differing structures of the relationships described it appears to me no accident that the greatest number of surviving studies for the *Disputa* is concerned with clarifying the arrangement and the relationships, that the greatest number of surviving studies for *The School of Athens* is concerned with clarifying individual groups and their neighbours and, finally, that the greatest number of surviving studies for the *Parnassus* is concerned with clarifying the positions of feet, hands and heads.

Thus, all these communities offer fundamentally different images of social reality - as do the miracles depicted in the *Stanza d'Eliodoro*. As in the shaping of the figures, there is an in-between area in the formation of the context: between the general theme and the particular subject of each narrative there exists an individual generalisation, a type of context with theologians, philosophers etc. as its middle-sized community. How were these three levels connected in Raphael's working procedure? The answer provided by the arrangement studies for the *Disputa* is that Raphael first conceived the type of context suitable to the middle-sized community, registering its relationships in the way the figures related to what was above them and at their centre. He then shaped the individual figures and groups of his basic theme in accordance with it by positioning and removing them - "*ponendo e levando*", as Leonardo would say. Always on the lookout for possible specific subject matter, Raphael would find one in the course of his work, and this enabled him to tighten up the relationships of the groups and figures, to organise them thoroughly and to realise and

complete them in the form of a narrative. Thus, the type of context appears individualised as a particular narrative.[16]

The second factor necessary for classic quality which I wish to emphasise is therefore, in Raphael's case, this: the social, communal reality of human beings' coexistence is explored in motifs, in figures and groups, in disjunctions and links, and is developed systematically as thematic components in middle-sized communities.

II, 4 The universal aspect worked out by Raphael differs from those of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Titian.

With all of these artists the reality they made visible to others is inseparable from the method by which they made it visible. I should like to draw attention to one of the differences, though at present I am unable to include Titian.

It is well-known that Leonardo's subject was Nature, perceptible Nature: plants, animals and human beings; water, air and clouds; light and shade; mental and physical movements; interactions that give rise to relationships. Leonardo explored Nature, describing it carefully and capturing it in finished drawings. With the object in front of him, he explored the particular with regard to the typical, searching for laws and rules. Crystallising and making the object visible as he explored it, he penetrated plants with regard to their growth (fig. 49) or thought of the bones of a skeleton in terms of the whole, shading them in terms of their extension as limbs (fig. 51). The strength, vitality and proportions of an object he intensified and clarified in relation to an idea of Nature (fig. 52). Going beyond reality, Leonardo proceeded by analogy to arrive at hybrid creatures and, extending reality, explored the possible to arrive at the destruction of Nature (fig. 50). This imaginative exploration of reality was study: preserved in studies and notes, in the course of many working years it lead to few pictures and only parts of it found a place in these.

As we have seen, it is different with Raphael. His subject was Man as a social being. Raphael's prior observations and judgements did not come to fruition until the working-out of his pictures, for only there could social coexistence be rendered visible as a series of relationships. In the kind of context he felt to be typical of a middle-sized community he let them become particular figures and groups, particular disjunctions and links, let them become an individual

[16] See chapter 2.

commercium giving rise to a community - let them become a narrative. That is how Raphael's imaginative exploration of reality is preserved.

Michelangelo is different again. His point of departure seems to have been his physical and mental experience of himself. Equipped with the ability to sense his own physical and mental existence in different states, he recognised this consciously, differentiating between the various states and ordering them into stages and sequences. Up to a point, everybody experiences their physical and mental states - as good health, illness, etc (figs. 3, 4 and 5). Michelangelo increased this knowledge enormously, intensified the experience and, extending this order of things to the world beyond, he approached God. He experienced physical and mental existence as metaphysical existence. On the ceiling of the *Sistine Chapel*, in the figures and groups of the Israelites' ancestors, of the prophets and angels, and of Yahweh himself, he arranged various states above one another. In doing so, he indicated what *vita activa, vita voluptosa, vita contemplativa, vita angelica* and *vita divina* might be and let them become figures and relationships between figures, arranged in stages and sequences.[17] Michelangelo experienced physical and mental existence as that of religious Man, of the individual before God. Experiencing it as, for instance, directional movement, love (fig. 3), reservation and sin (figs. 4 and 5), he allotted these to the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Covenant, the Incarnation, to conversion and martyrdom, and to the Last Judgement. In the *Sistine Chapel* he depicted the origins of religious Man's history from the creation of Primordial matter to the undivided community of the just and unjust and its end in the Last Judgement. Michelangelo penetrated and ordered his experience. He drew his figures out of himself, put them in their places and shaped them in their places. He thus rendered them objective reality. His exploration of human beings' inner reality is presented in the two sections of religious metaphysical existence depicted on the ceiling and altar wall of the *Sistine Chapel*.

III

[17] See Rudolf Kuhn, *Michelangelo. Die sixtinische Decke. Beiträge über ihre Quellen und zu ihrer Auslegung*, (Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, ed. Bandmann, Hubala, Schöne Bd. 10). Berlin 1975.

III, 1 The contrasting universal aspects were represented according to a number of categories. Following Leonardo, I shall mention ten.

To demonstrate them I have again chosen the second section of *The School of Athens* (fig. 18). We have already considered five of the categories. The figures are depicted in body and drapery so that their surfaces are visible; their inner life, too, is made visible in their bodies and surfaces. Body (surface) - *corpo (superficie)* - is thus the first category. The figures' bodies and the mental and emotional states expressed in their actions are depicted in terms of the two complementary categories *moto* and *quiete*, motion and rest. As individuals or as communities the figures are arranged in rows, groups, etc. and formed concisely: the fourth category is therefore *figura*, the figure. The figures are placed in relationships with each other which are motivated by their actions; correspondingly, the next category is *sito*, location.

Turning to the categories we have not yet discussed, we encounter the two complementary ones of *propinquità* and *remozione*, proximity and distance. An example is found between the row including Alcibiades and the figure of Socrates, where a young man is seen in the middle of a *commercium* of teaching and listening figures (fig. 18). He is present, but does not take part; he is present, but at the same time far away: he shuts himself off with his left arm and raises his head in thought. This is a familiar situation: one is at the scene of a conversation without participating in it, following instead a thought that has arisen out of the conversation. Yet proximity and distance are related: the meditation proceeds from the conversation and lends it additional atmosphere. One recognises that the two categories constitute terms in which Raphael judged and stated meanings. A second example is provided by the area around the two reliefs let into the wall (fig. 18). The lower relief depicts craving seizure, the upper one courageous fighting. The figures are related to the reliefs behind them. The hand of the man pointing out the way to the hurrying figure echoes the thigh and arm of the seized Nereid: "there's what you crave; hold it tight!" The man ushering on the same hurrying figure raises his arm towards the relief above, where the courageous fighting seems to be an extension of his gaze: "come here," he beckons; "to dispute and conflict," say his eyes. Thus, that which is depicted behind, at a distance, interprets and intensifies the action in front. The categories of proximity and distance are, in fact, central to *The School of Athens* as a whole (fig. 17). Different aspects dominate the first three sections of the composition. In the first, the figures and groups mainly issue

from the floor, remaining restfully in their places. In the second section, the figures are above ground level, spread across from left to right in an interrupted sequence of animation. The third section is governed by self-contained figures emerging deep in thought from the distance and by figures hurrying into the distance, and is dominated by Plato and Socrates approaching from behind and breaking up the composition.

The last categories to be discussed are light and shade (*luce and tenebre*) and colour (*colore*). These are especially important for the representation of the overall context and of self-contained independence. Raphael completed compositions like *The School of Athens* twice: in the cartoon (fig. 23) as a *chiaroscuro* drawing on the scale intended for the figures and on the wall as a *fresco* in colour. Beginning by establishing the overall context through the distribution of light and shade, he then proceeded to strengthen the individual figures and groups by means of the various colours and colour combinations.

These ten criteria of representation are worthy of the term 'category' because all the figures have been assessed according to them. However, there are also other *criteria* - for example, 'narrowness' and 'breadth' respectively in the complexes including Pythagoras and Euclid or 'open' and 'closed' in the single figures of the reclining Diogenes and the man seated in the foreground. Then there are differences of visual character - the 'light' of all the paintings in the *Stanza della Segnatura* and the 'dark' of those in the *Stanza d'Eliodoro*, for instance. Finally, there are basic stylistic modes - the solemn and affecting ' High Style' of the main frescoes in the *stanze* or the often humorous and always lively 'Middle Style' of the biblical scenes in the neighbouring *loggias*.

III, 2

Chief among Raphael's predecessors is Luca Signorelli and his cycle of frescoes, *The End of the World*, in the cathedral of Orvieto. Of all the great individuals of the late quattrocento it was Signorelli who employed a wealth of differing, even opposing, visual characters for representational ends and thus accomplished a significant step forwards. However, he used these visual characters in the manner of patterns. He did not assess them according to necessary representational *criteria*.

Such categories are also lacking in Alberti's theory of art, even if some of our categories can be traced back to *criteria* cited by him in other contexts. It was Leonardo who nominated these *criteria* as suitable for assessing reality (in-

deed, my list stems from him) and it was Leonardo who used them to depict reality. He called them *officia* and *praedicamenta* (categories) of the eye:[18]

To put it better, that which is visible is included in the science of painting. Therefore, the ten predicates of the eye mentioned above are, according to reason, the subjects of the ten books into which I divide my discussion of painting[19].

III, 3 Art as a craft, a liberal art and a science[20].

Towards 1500 ideas of what constituted art in painting thus changed for a second time in the 15th century. At the beginning of the century Cennino Cennini, in his *Libro dell'Arte*, insisted on the notion that art in painting consisted of craftsmanship, leaving the entire field of composition for example, to the genius of each individual painter, to tradition or to the wishes of the patron. In 1435 Leon Battista Alberti, in accordance with the new art founded by Brunelleschi, Donatello and Masaccio, removed composition to a large extent from the realm of individual genius and placed it at the centre of a theory of what constitutes art in painting. Put another way, he relocated the art of painting in the realm of composition, taking Rhetoric as his model. Like Rhetoric, the art of painting thus became an *ars bona*, a liberal art.

Leonardo then effected a change in both theory and practice by relating painting to something quite different. By relating it to its subject, reality, he determined its form as that of an investigatory science. As such, painting was responsible to its subject and, as a science developing methods of representation, it was responsible to the spirit of research. This required *investigazione, speculazione, giudizio* and *grande discrezzione d' ingegno* (great powers of distinction).

Painting was a science with its own field of investigation and its own subject, i.e. reality which is visible and can be rendered visible. With Leonardo this was the reality of Nature perceived around us, with Raphael it was the communal reality of human beings and with Michelangelo the inner metaphysi-

---

[18] Lionardo, *Das Buch von der Malerei* §§ 438, 511.
[19] Lionardo, *Das Buch von der Malerei* §§ 438; translation by McMahon.
[20] See chapters 5 and 6.

cal reality of religious Man. The subject as a whole was extensive; the artists perceived different aspects of it each of them a unity.

The science of painting had its own method: grounded in reality and experience of reality, it made reality visible according to necessary, reasoned criteria and categories in a structure of many stages.

The goal of this science was the extensive representation of the overall context of reality in thematic components from the particular viewpoint of the artist. The formal requirements were transparency, evidence (as a result of thorough working-out and execution), unity and completeness (as a result of appropriate balance and proportion).

Looked at from this standpoint, the *quattrocento* had studied individual areas of reality with regard to expression and correctness, to rules and laws. It had used these individual areas in abundance and variety in its compositions in order to achieve a semblance of reality, which was basically decorative in character.

As an *ars bona*, a liberal art, painting had certainly made use of science - Alberti that of mathematics and geometry (perspective), the sculptor Ghiberti of writings on optics by Bacon, Peckham and others. Yet Leonardo asked if painting itself was a science, "*se la pittura è scientia o' no*". With Leonardo, one must affirm that at this particular moment in its history and in the work of these particular artists painting was indeed a science.

I should like to emphasise that Leonardo was not a split personality. He was not a scientist as long as he researched and an artist as soon as he produced finished results. With him - as with Michelangelo, Raphael and, presumably, Titian - both activities were one and the same thing. That is why Raphael did not include painters among the poets in the *Parnassus* but placed himself and his friend Sodoma alongside the scientists in *The School of Athens*.

IV

IV, I

I now come to the fourth aspect of classic quality, the compositional principle of discontinuity and the fundamental surprise within sequences of figures and groups. For the former I must refer back to the first aspect I emphasised. I shall then proceed to the method of narrating a *storia* by means of the sequence and arrangement of figures and groups.

Using the second section of *The School of Athens* (fig. 18), I explained how the emotional and mental states of one or more human beings were represented as action and how the combination of several figures was motivated by their actions together and in opposition to each other. Because this action was understood as repeatedly changing its context abruptly, it was repeatedly arranged discontinuously. This is especially clear in the second section of the School of Athens: note how the man rushes in and turns his head abruptly to the rear and how the man standing front-on turns his head and hand abruptly sideways. Spontaneity was not only recognised repeatedly in the sequence of action but also on a deeper, fundamental level - in the relationships of all the figures to one another. Discontinuity thus became the principle governing the formation of relationships, became the formal principle of composition as a whole. In our example this can be seen in the disruption of the sequence of groups and figures that occurs between the man pointing out the way and the man beckoning, a disruption that allows a view of the reliefs in the wall. The beckoning man detaches himself from Alcibiades' row, but this row and the figure of Socrates are connected by the figure standing farther off. The opposition of Alcibiades' row and the figure of Socrates - and of the listening and discussing they represent - has such a decisive effect because it brings to a close the sequence of abrupt turning - disruption - detachment: the figures come to a halt and stand opposite each other. Discontinuity is present in the turning and detachment, the links and disjunctions; and in this discontinuity the mental and emotional life of the figures has become the form of their relationship.

IV, 2

To place this historically I repeat the results of earlier research. The Early Renaissance had succeeded in replacing a simple coherence of sequences of groups and figures by making them part of a *continuum*. On this principle,

the artists of the Early Renaissance produced an ordered whole by opposing and repeating various distinct units[21].

Perhaps this may be accounted for as follows. Precisely because the concern was to discover richness and variety of detail in reality, to include this in pictures and to develop narratives from it, there emerged a new concept of the unity of the whole. Differentiation then created a structure of opposition and repetition. Success was achieved when compositional difficulties arising from the subject matter were overcome. This is most striking when, as with Uccello, structure of this kind gave order to the disorder of a battle scene or the chaos of the *Great Flood*[22].

Historically, discontinuity as a principle of composition was thus the opposite of continuity. In fact, it was not an exclusive opposite, since discontinuity needed continuity in order to break through it eventfully: it was the conquering of continuity[23]: This is nowhere clearer than in the fundamental surprises within the sequences of figures and groups.

IV, 3

The painters we are discussing included fundamental surprises at certain points in the overall context of figures and groups - especially to the right of centre, where they occur unexpectedly after the climax of the composition. The artists did this by suddenly abandoning that which formed the basis of the discontinuous arrangement, thereby lending the subject an unexpected profundity: Thus, there is a sudden change at the climax of *The School of Athens* (figs. 17 and 19) and a fundamental surprise to the right of this centre. First, the sudden change. The first and second sections of the composition are governed by the distinction between figures closer to, and further away from, the beholder. The nearer figures in the first section are actively involved in the thrust for, and the acquisition, possession and passing on of knowledge, those in the second section in academic controversy and philosophical dispute. In both sections the more distant figures appear at intervals between the others and, taking no active part, indulge their moods. There are three of them: in the first section the boy on the left and the youth further to the right; in the second section the young man

---

[21] Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus,* pp. 129sq.
[22] Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus,* pp. 128sq.
[23] Rudolf Kuhn, *Komposition und Rhythmus,* p. 137.

meditating between Alcibiades' row and the figure of Socrates. These intermediate figures are either in position or omitted altogether, as where the reliefs become visible with their depictions of craving and courage. At first, this order of things continues in the third section: there is the distant figure of the old man approaching deep in thought and there is the row of figures lined up on the left of Aristotle and Plato, with its repetition of the figure of Socrates (in reverse) and of Alcibiades' row. Yet the next intermediate figures - and this is the sudden change - are none other than Plato and Aristotle themselves, coming forwards as major figures, the major figures of the entire composition. At right-angles to the sequence ending in Socrates, standing within the succession of moods and approaching from the rear, Plato and Aristotle embody a different kind of knowledge, one which represents so great a breakthrough that the figures who had hitherto been in front now take up positions in relation to Plato and Aristotle, lining up on either side of them. After this sudden change at the climax of the composition the fundamental surprise occurs diagonally in front of it, to the right, in the shape of Diogenes. As the first figure of the third section of the composition, he would normally have corresponded symmetrically to Socrates, the final figure of the second section. But instead, he is shifted considerably to the left and down the steps. With Diogenes the terraced arrangement towards the centre and sides, which had governed the composition up to and beyond the centre, collapses. Demonstratively lying in the path of Plato and Aristotle, he embodies the life lived according to his teachings. Through this deepening of the subject matter his person also relativises the themes that had dominated the composition up to this point. At both these points in *The School of Athens* a previously established continuity and a basic compositional structure are relinquished and broken through eventfully, the subject matter suddenly acquiring a more profound treatment.

I should like to list some fundamental surprises in other works, referring briefly to their narrative significance. The hands of the man drowning in Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* (fig. 1) and the father carrying his dead son in *The Great Flood* (fig. 2) present the downfall sensed or feared elsewhere in the compositions[24]. In *The Last Judgement* in the *Sistine Chapel* the fundamental surprise is represented by St. Bartholomew and the wall of saints on Christ's left. Presenting their instruments of martyrdom threateningly, they explain, in the sense of Revelation 6:9f., the angels' battle with the damned, who are striv-

[24] See chapter 1.

ing upwards to Heaven. As we have seen, the fundamental surprise in Raphael's *Disputa* (figs. 9 and 10) occurs with the figures of Sts. Ambrose and Augustine and their two companions, who break through the debate on the relative merits of reading holy writings and contemplating the sacrament by demonstrating that the Church Fathers' books are directly inspired by a vision. In *The Expulsion of Heliodorus* (fig. 36) the overall narrative context of the figures is disrupted as the interior of the temple, the ark of the Covenant and its cherubs become visible and the temple's inviolability is protected by the heavenly rider[25]. At the front of *The Expulsion of Attila* the pope halts Attila, who sees Sts. Peter and Paul in Heaven and recoils in shock with his arms stretched sideways. Attila's outstretched arms and his shock arrest the attack on the pope and the vision started by two of the riders. Yet there is really no need of these doings in front, for further back, to the right of centre, a miracle takes place: the flags turn in the wind and, following the two saints' threatening directive, the first soldiers are already marching homewards to the strains of music.

IV, 4 It is worth noting which human abilities took on visible form in continuity and discontinuity.

It was the achievement of early Renaissance art to have discovered the richness and variety of reality, allowing it to enter its pictures and developing narratives from it. To grant the richness and variety of the reality depicted rule and order by means of a repetition and opposition which emphasised the individual, structured the whole and brought out both of these features - that was the result of human law-giving ability.

It was the achievement of the later artists under discussion here to have allowed the overall context to be motivated in the spontaneous actions of living figures. Moreover, by means of fundamental surprises permitting the continuity established beforehand to be broken the later artists managed to give full effect both to the rules and laws and their overthrow. They thus granted human spontaneity visible form.

It is pointless to try to curb this spontaneity; one can only describe how, and to what ends, the artists made use of it. They set it in a tense relationship to the law-giving ability by regularly bringing the limits of this ability into play

[25] See chapter 4.

and by breaking through and overcoming the links it produced. And they always did this to achieve a more thorough treatment of the subject.

Something quite special happened here, for it was the experience both of their own continuous, persevering work and of their own ideas and developmental leaps which, by inclusion in the method of narrative representation, brought progress to the artists themselves and to their art.

Thus, these men cultivated the experience of their own spontaneity which, although related to an order of things, was not subject to it, and they made it part of their method of representation. Behind this lay the inheritance of Antiquity, of eighty years of the Renaissance and 160 of Humanism: It was this history which released in these men the forces which set painting new tasks and which worked out new conceptions of natural, social and religious reality.

To recapitulate: the four features which constitute that quality I consider worthy of recognition as having achieved classic *status* are these: -

a) The emotional and mental states of one or more human beings were represented throughout as action, in the poses and movements of the figures. The contextual combination of the figures was motivated by their actions together and in opposition to each other.

b) Reality was explored with regard to a basic theme. This universal aspect was represented systematically in thematic components. In the case of Raphael the social, communal reality of human beings' coexistence was explored in motifs, figures, groups, links and disjunctions, and the depiction of this reality was developed as thematic components in middle-sized communities.

c) This reality was assessed in relation to a number of categories and its representation in the finished work was constructed meticulously and motivated on several levels.

The second and third features meant that painting had progressed beyond its earlier definitions as a craft or a liberal art and had become a science, the science of visible reality and of reality made visible.

d) The experience of his own developmental leaps and his own mental spontaneity, which the artist acquired from his personal development and his persistent work, was adopted in the method of developing subjects. It took the form of discontinuity as a principle of composition and of fundamental surprises within the sequence of figures and groups.

For a characterisation of the art under discussion these four aspects belong together; for classic status the fourth seems to me decisive.

I should like to make some additional points.

1) As an academic discipline, art history can only help to overcome present-day reluctance to apprehend and experience the depiction of reality by explaining the different conception of painting and of what constitutes art in painting and by working out a corresponding way of looking at the works.

2) Art's change in *status* from liberal art to science was a quite particular step forwards. Painting as a science had in common with painting as a liberal art the experience that reality was visible and could be made visible, as well as the - if anything, stronger - conviction that there existed a mode of apprehending reality which presented its discoveries in drawing and painting. This common experience and this common conviction lay at the root of the fresh apprehension of reality in terms of its breadth and depth, its links and motivations. This renewed exploration represented progress in an art which had already apprehended individual details of reality, clarified them, shaped them and constructed pictures from them. In its new phase it remained an art of study.

As soon as the basic definition of art changed the aspect of overall quality in which classic status has to be recognised could no longer be 'art as science'. A case in point is the change from an art of study to one of imagination in the Baroque period[26], with its shift of emphasis from composition studies and studies from nature to first ideas and sketches. Yet the main problem in determining classic status remains my fourth aspect which, I repeat, I hold to be decisive.

3) In the history of the visual arts painting as a science - and moreover of classic *status* - occupied a rare social position among the intellectual products of its time; for the experience of visible reality and the conviction of a corresponding mode of representation awakened expectations of a boundless wealth of revelations about the world. These expectations were fulfilled in work after work.

The position of these artists also affected that of their patrons. As far as can be ascertained, they reduced still further both their demands for detailed execution of written programmes and the degree of their intervention as a whole.

---

[26] See Kurt Badt, *Die Kunst des Nicolas Poussin*, Cologne 1969, pp. 16sqq.

The nature of Leonardo's oeuvre and his way of working precluded the possibility of substantial intervention. After initial indecision, Michelangelo appears to have won his independence in painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by replacing the proposed programme, which he rejected as pitiful. In a letter he claimed that the pope finally told him to paint what he wanted and, in my opinion, there is nothing in the works themselves to contradict this[27]. As the preparatory composition studies for the Disputa show, Raphael could not have been charged with representing the altar, the sacrament or the subject of dispute. At the most, he must have been commissioned with the depiction of the Trinity, the Deesis, the Evangelists and saints in Heaven and the Church Fathers, theologians and the faithful on earth. But what does this list of figures tell us about the picture?

4) I have mentioned four classic artists. The three I have discussed in detail at times lived close together in the towns of Florence and Rome. They defined each other reciprocally. On the personal level this even took the form of unpleasant incidents, of antagonism and of enmity among their followers. Yet they tackled their tasks, explored, discovered and represented in such a way that no limitations are noticeable in their works. By mutual definition they distinguished themselves from each other, so that each worked at a different universal aspect and together they formed a group.

5) During the High (and late) Renaissance other excellent artists were at work alongside them - Fra Bartolommeo, Andrea del Sarto, Paolo Veronese, etc. The historical location of classic art may therefore be defined not as classic = High Renaissance, but as classic within the High Renaissance.

Finally, what use is it to recognise a classic? For the material itself its use is to have defined a quality as rank and to know what is possible as a result of intelligence, skill and courage. And for oneself its use is to strengthen these three things.

---

[27] Michelangelo's letter to Giovanfrancesco Fattucci. See: Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, Princeton 1943sqq., vol. 2, Appendix Nr.90.

APPENDIX

SCULPTURES WITH THREE DISTINCT VIEWS BY GIAN LORENZO BERNINI AND IGNAZ GÜNTHER[1]

One has three and only three views of the sculptures by Ignaz Günther[2] and Bernini to be discussed in this paper when one views them first from half-left (at an angle of about forty-five degrees), then frontally, and finally from half-right (again at an angle of about forty-five degrees). Let us begin with one example: the *Pietà* of 1764 by Ignaz Günther in Weyarn[3]. The primary, frontal

---

[1] Translated from the German by Michael Foster. Paper delivered at the International Colloquium on Bernini May 8 - May 9, 1980 at the American Academy in Rome arranged by Irving Lavin, Princeton. Auf deutsch: Rudolf Kuhn, "Die Dreiansichtigkeit der Skulpturen des Gian Lorenzo Bernini und des Ignaz Günther." *Festschrift für Wilhelm Messerer*, hg. Klaus Ertz. Cologne 1980, pp. 231-249.

[2] For the works of Franz Ignaz Günther (1725-75), see: Adolph Feulner, *Ignaz Günther: Kurfürstlich bayrischer Hofbildhauer*, Vienna 1920; Adolf Feulner, *Ignaz Günther: Der grosse Bildhauer des bayrischen Rokoko*, Munich 1947; Gerhard P. Woeckel, *Studien zu Ignaz Günther*, (Diss. phil., University of Munich, 1949); Arnold Schoenberger, *Ignaz Günther*, Munich, 1954; Theodor Müller, *Ignaz Günther: Bildwerke in Weyarn*, Stuttgart 1964; Gerhard Woeckel, *Ignaz Günther: Die Handzeichnungen des kurfürstlich bayerischen Hofbildhauers Franz Ignaz Günther*, 2nd ed. Weissenhorn 1976.

[3] Feulner, *Günther* (1920), pp. 17sq.; Feulner, *Günther* (1947), p. 92; Schoenberger, *Günther*, p. 48sq.

view of the *Pietà* is insufficient on its own:[4] Christ's head falls so far back that the face cannot be seen at all. And this is an *Andachtsbild*! In this group Ignaz Günther had indicated the main view by making the edge of the ground more or less straight at the front: the correct standpoint lies perpendicular to this straight line. Short, more or less straight edges also occur at half-left and half-right; opposite them lie the correct standpoints for the first and third views.

Each of the three views in sculptures by Ignaz Günther and Bernini has a different content; together they offer three thematically different aspects of the same subject. We may compare these works with two older works in Munich: the *Patrona Bavariae* by Hans Krumper on the façade of the Residenz in Munich (1616)[5] and the statue of the *Virgin* by Hubert Gerhard on the Virgin's column in the Marienplatz (before 1598; from the Frauenkirche).[6] The more recent work, by Krumper, also has three views; Gerhard's has only one. But in Krumper's work there is no change of content in the three views; it is simply a matter of arrangement, of grouping, with no thematic differentiation. But thematic differentiation is precisely the issue with Günther and Bernini. In the *Pietà* the first, half-left, view shows violent suffering: Christ's body is broken over the sorrowful Virgin's knee, forming an arc and displaying the wound in his side. Clearly these features are aimed at arousing the viewer's emotions. Furthermore, only in this view, where both of the Virgin's legs are visible, is her sitting position clear; only here are the linear parallels in her garments, Christ's right arm and leg, and his loincloth apparent. Only from the frontal position, on the other hand, can one see how the sharp edges of the folds in the Virgin's garment and in Christ's loincloth isolate and accentuate Christ's limbs at the points of contact. The representation of pain that arouses pity and other feelings in the first view is followed in the main, or frontal, view by another subject: the beholder is now offered the full view of the *Corpus Domini* as the object of the Virgin's mourning, in a manner to which one is accustomed from altarpieces such as Rogier van der Weyden's *Deposition*. The width of the cross corre-

---

[4] Feulner, *Günther* (1920), p. 18; "*Die Ansicht von vorne lässt zunächst unbefriedigt, bis sich der Beschauer durch Herumgehen die fehlenden Ergänzungen geholt hat; wichtige Teile wie der rechte Arm Mariens werden erst in der Seitenansicht sichtbar.*"

[5] Erich Hubala, *Die Kunst des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, vol. 9) Berlin 1970, p. 297, fig. 340.

[6] Michael Schattenhofer, *Die Mariensäule in München*, 2nd ed., Munich and Zurich 1971; R. A. Pelzer, "Der Bildhauer Hubert Gerhard in München und Innsbruck," *Kunst and Kunsthandwerk*, 21, 1918, pp. 109sqq. and esp. pp. 148sqq.

sponds exactly to that of the group; this emphasises the thematic rapport between the cross and the figures. The cross is also related to the geometry of the wounds[7]- that is, the wounds in Christ's feet, the wound in the Virgins heart, and the end of the horizontal beam of the cross are aligned on one line, and the wounds in Christ's hand, in his side, and in the Virgin's heart on another. The final view in Ignaz Günther's work is simple: it offers for our veneration the wounds in Christ's feet and left hand; to his right we see the lamenting putto. Pain, mourning, and lamentation follow closely upon one another. A similar closing figure which eases up the beholder's emotions is also to be found in Poussin's *Lamentation over the Dead Christi* in the Alte Pinakothek at Munich, a painting, which at Günther's time (according to an Inventory of 1748) was kept in the Residenz of Munich[8].

II

Let us turn to Bernini. The primary view of his earliest monumental sculpture, the *Aeneas*[9], informs us that the group probably has other distinct views: the frontal view is insufficient for a complete grasp of the three figures, their expressions, their relationship with each other, and the theme of *pietas* developed in them. The half-left view reveals Aeneas' face and the figures of the Penates held by Anchises; from the right one perceives little Ascanius with his oil lamp. But it is only in his subsequent works - the *Pluto and Proserpina*, the *David*, and the *Apollo and Daphne*[10] - that we can fully appreciate Bernini's achievement with triple views and the direction in which he develops them.

When we compare the profile (fig. 54) with the front (fig. 55) of Apollo's head, we find that the expression - which resides in the eyes and, as so often in the visual arts, in the hair - is completely different in the two views. Seen in profile, the eye is sharply defined; the pupil appears to be a deep cavity; the glance is open and exalted and the backward sweep of the "blazing" locks lends it strength. From a frontal position, however, we observe that the arch of the

---

[7] Schoenberger, *Günther*, p. 49.

[8] 103 x 146 cm. Alte Pinakothek München, Katalog IV, Französische und Spanische Malerei, Munich 1972, p. 50.

[9] *Aeneas, Anchises and Ascanius* 1618-1619, Rome, Galleria Borghese.

[10] *Pluto and Proserpina* 1621-1622, *David* 1623, *Apollo and Daphne* 1622-1624, Rome, Galleria Borghese.

upper eyelid is not placed vertically above the pupil, as one would expect from the profile view; it is shifted, rather, toward the middle of the face. This small change produces an expression of speechlessness. The pupil is not a bored hole, but rather a piece of marble around which the iris has been hollowed out: Apollo's gaze is fixed and staring. His hair is parted in the centre, and the flattened locks over the forehead emphasise the unfocused quality of his expression. But it is not only Apollo's face that changes: with the shifts in viewpoint the whole group emerges as a narrative progression. The profile of Apollo belongs to the main view of the group and his full face to the closing view. I shall attempt to characterise this narrative progression. As is well known, the plinth was later altered[11] and the orientation of the group was changed, so that today the first view is frontal, perpendicular to the plinth, the main view from half-right, diagonal to the plinth, and the closing view[12] perpendicular to the right-hand side of the plinth. Originally, however, the first view (fig. 56) showed Apollo approaching, hovering, seeking Daphne's glance, reaching her, and tenderly drawing close. This view provides the exposition; the main view (fig. 57) is concerned with the climax of the narrative. We no longer see the drapery arching behind Apollo's back; the emphasis is on the inclination of his body and the extension of his right arm. Daphne lunges forward to escape him. Her body is arched like a bow, of which his is the string: the whole group thus becomes a symbol of Apollo. The final view (fig. 58) stresses the conclusion of the story, Daphne's metamorphosis: we notice the leaves and roots and her flesh changing into bark beneath Apollo's left hand (which is visible only in this view). The god's speechless amazement is now revealed in the frontal view of his face: gone are the radiance and exaltation that characterise him in the main view. Daphne stretches high above him (as Proserpina also stretches above Pluto) and, in a movement that extends from her right foot through her left arm, twists herself further and further out of his reach, rising from the earth as she undergoes the metamorphosis. Thus Bernini accomplishes the difficult task of achieving a narrative progression by exploiting the possibilities of changes in viewpoint.

---

[11] Peter Anselm Riedl, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini: Apoll und Daphne*, Stuttgart 1960, p. 12; Rudolf Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini: The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, 2nd ed., London 1966, p. 183.

[12] The closing view of Bernini's Apollo and Daphne is represented in Bernardo Bellotto's *Entrance to a Palace* in the National Gallery in Washington (Hans Kauffmann, *Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini: Die figürlichen Kompositionen*, Berlin 1970, fig. 40).

III

In attempting to demonstrate that there are differentiated views in Bernini's sculpture and to examine the uses made of them, I have so far cited groups that he created before the turning point in his life, religious beliefs, and art[13] which I have elsewhere dated to the years 1642-43 and explained in terms of the influence of the writings of Saint Francis of Sales.[14] The statue of *Daniel*[15] was created after this turning point. The surviving studies for it offer insight into how views with differentiated contents were produced in practice. It goes without saying that it is extremely difficult to design and carve statues and groups that offer compositionally and thematically changing views.

[13] Bernini's contemporaries knew that there had been a turning point in his life and religious feelings. His biographers Filippo Baldinucci and Domenico Bernini dated it to the years 1639-40: "forty years before his death," or "at the time of his marriage"; see Irving Lavin's comparison of the lives in "Bernini's Death," *Art Bulletin*, 54, 1972, p. 160, pp. 184 sq., p. 186.

[14] Rudolf Kuhn, *Die Entstehung des Bernini'schen Heiligenbildes: Dissertation über die Auffassung, den Stil und die Komposition der Skulpturen von 1621 bis in die fünfziger Jahre*, (Diss. phil. University of Munich 1966) 2nd ed., Berlin, 1967; revised edition in: Rudolf Kuhn, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Gesammelte Beiträge zur Auslegung seiner Skulpturen.* (ARS FACIENDI Beiträge und Studien zur Kunstgeschichte. vol. 5.), Frankfurt 1993. Baldinucci gives Bernini's marriage in 1639 as the reason for the crisis: "We may truthfully say . . . that from that hour (viz., of his marriage) he began to behave more like a cleric than a layman." This date seems too early; the turning point in Bernini's art occurs in ca. 1644. It is more likely that a crisis in his life and, consequently, a religious crisis was precipitated by the disaster of 1641 when the third story of the bell tower of Saint Peter's had to be demolished; Bernini fell into disgrace with the pope and thereafter suffered from a lack of public commissions. The resolution of the crisis may be connected with the publication of the Italian edition of Saint Francis of Sales' *Treatise on the Love of God* in 1642. Bernini praised the saint's writings to Chantelou in 1665: "*Le Livre de Philothee est encore fort excellent, c'est le livre que le Pape estime le plus*" (P. Fréart de Chantelou, *Journal du voyage du Cavalier Bernin en France*, ed. L. Lalanne, Paris 1885, p. 113).

[15] *Daniel* 1655-1657, Rome, S. Maria del Popolo, Chigi Chapel.

Daniel is represented in prayer.[16] In the exposition view (fig. 59), the lion licks Daniel's foot; this tells us that Daniel is out of danger and not praying to be delivered from the lion. The leg comes forward and then recedes, leading to the drapery, which winds upward, flame like, as a metaphor for prayer. The arms, held high, wide apart at the elbows but with joined hands, overlap the head as it inclines backwards. In the main view (fig. 60), the arms no longer overlap the head; they have been shifted to the side. The head now appears above the arms, framed by the angle between the upper and the lower left arm. Daniel, seen rising up in prayer in the exposition view, now looks up to Heaven and communicates with God. In the closing view (fig. 61), the connection between body and head is no longer visible. The left cheek, rounded at the bottom, is seen above his shoulder, which is rounded on top; the head thus seems to hover above the body. Daniel has reached, through prayer, a state of exaltation beyond his body. The three moments represented in these three views inform us about what prayer was to Bernini.

Among the surviving studies for the figure of *Daniel*, one shows the main view and one the exposition view; both are in Leipzig (Museum der Bildenden Künste). In the first drawing (fig. 63), the treatment of the arms and the position of the head above the bend in the arm correspond to the completed work. Small differences may be ignored; the position of the legs shows conclusively that the intention is to represent the figure in the main view. The second drawing (fig. 62) corresponds to the executed work in the raised and outstretched arms, which overlap the head and conceal the prayerful glance, and in

[16] Bernini tried to avoid repeating himself thematically; with each commission he sought to represent different interior states, which approach step by step the *unio mystica* of the Saint Teresa and the love-death of the Blessed Lodovica Albertoni. To this *histoire du divin amour* belong the following religious experiences, which may be seen in the light of passages in Saint Francis of Sales' treatise (*Oeuvres*, vols. 4-5, Annecy 1894): initial chock and the emotional stirring of divinity in Constantine (vol. 4, pp. 116sq., p. 125); faithful obedience to a divine directive in Habakkuk (vol. 5, pp. 39sqq., pp. 101sqq.); hopeful prayer in Daniel (vol. 4, pp. 140sqq.); yearning, repentant love in Mary Magdelene (vol. 4, pp. 153sqq.); contemplation of Christ's suffering in Jerome (vol. 4, p. 155, pp. 272sqq.); the *unio mystica* in Teresa (vol. 4, p. 335; vol. 5, p. 12, p. 18, pp. 23-25, pp. 112sqq., pp. 116sqq.); and the love-death in Lodovica Albertoni (vol. 5, p. 42). To these examples I would add the tomb of Urban VIII, in its final version, and that of Alexander VII (vol. 5, pp. 36sqq.). The passages are quoted in the original French version and the Italian version of 1642 in the above-mentioned book of mine: Rudolf Kuhn, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Gesammelte Beiträge zur Auslegung seiner Skulpturen.*

the position of the legs; the intention is to represent the figure in the exposition view.

In these two studies we have proof that Bernini really did distinguish between views and work each one out separately. On another sheet with three studies (fig. 64), also in Leipzig, the intensity of the chalk strokes indicates that he is concerned with the neck and with the transition from the head to the torso. When we examine the study in the centre, we see that the problem concerned the inclination of the head toward the left shoulder; Bernini emphasised the symmetry of the curve of the cheek with that of the shoulder. As we have already seen, the relationship between the cheek and the shoulder is important in the closing view of the statue (compare the sketches by Günther figs. 65 and 66 which are not discussed here.).

It would be impossible to produce a figure from the sum of the worked-out poses in such drawings. To put it another way, it would be impossible to take views that had first been worked out separately and then combine them directly in the sculpture. *Bozzetti* were the means for uniting the three views and balancing them with one another. The surviving clay *bozetto*[17] of the *Daniel* figure (which cannot be accepted as autograph without reservations) is, however, too finished for this purpose; it represents a later phase, more or less comparable with that of the drawn studies. Small clay figures could, however, be modeled until the body, head, limbs, and drapery appeared distinct, ordered, and intelligible from three viewpoints.

Once the views and the composition had been worked out in the *bozetto*, it was time to develop the separate views in drawn studies or further clay *bozetti* (among these I rank the surviving *bozetto* for the *Daniel*).[18] As is well known, Bernini distinguished between clay and wax *bozetti*; naturally enough, none of the latter has survived. We might hypothetically assume that in his earlier years wax, the more plastic material, served for the sketch-*bozetti* and quickly drying clay for the study-*bozetti*, until Bernini changed to wooden models for some of the larger objects, such as the *Cathedra Petri*[19]. This hypothesis

[17] Wittkower, *Bernini*, p. 223.

[18] The distinction made her between sketch-*bozetti* and study-*bozetti* is analogous to the distinction between drawn sketches and studies in Kurt Badt, *Eugène Delacroix: Drawings*, Oxford 1946, pp. 33-34.

[19] Wittkower, *Bernini*, pp. 235sqq.

would make more plausible Joachim von Sandrart's statement[20] that Bernini had shown him, in his *studio*, no less than twenty-two wax *bozetti* for the single figure of *Longinus*. And with so many *bozetti*, the sculptor would have had opportunity enough for sketching three views in their relation to one another. As Irving Lavin has aptly remarked, "we are faced with the paradox that behind Bernini's revolutionary effects of freedom and spontaneity there lay an equally unprecedented degree of conscious premeditation."[21]

IV

Before I return to the sculpture of Ignaz Günther, there are two additional matters which I would like to consider.

Concerning Wittkower on multiple views. In the chapter on Bernini in his volume in the Pelican History of Art, Rudolf Wittkower devoted an important section to the problem of "sculpture with one and many views."[22] Here he advanced in no uncertain terms the thesis that Bernini's sculptures have only one view, not many. On the strength of the drawings we have examined - the

---

[20] Joachim von Sandrart, *Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste von 1675*, ed. A. R. Peltzer, Munich 1925, p. 286; Wittkower, *Bernini*, p. 197; Lavin, "Bozzetti and Modelli: Notes on Sculptural Procedure from the Early Renaissance through Bernini," *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes: Akten des 21. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte in Bonn 1964*, Berlin 1967, vol. 3, pp. 93sqq., esp. p. 102.

[21] Lavin, "Bozzetti and Modelli," p. 103.

[22] Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600 to 1750*, Harmondsworth 1973, pp. 100-103; cf. Rudolf Wittkower, "Le Bernin et le baroque Romain," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, vol. 11, 1934, p. 330: "*Cette multiplicité des point de vue dans la sculpture est une caractéristique de la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle. Pour la plastique de la Renaissance, l'unité de l'action va de soi. Presque toutes les sculptures, jusque vers 1525, sont faites pour être contemplées d'un seul point de vue. . . . Lorsque le Bernin adopte un point de vue principal, il marque un retour aux principes de la plastique de la Renaissance, mais c'est là sa seule façon de réaliser l'unité d'action et de mouvement. Telle est donc la ligne de partage qui sépare le Bernin et Jean de Bologne: d'un part, unité de point de vue, de l'autre, multiplicité de point de vue.*" A.E. Brinckmann, *Barockskulptur*, Berlin-Neubabelsberg, 1917, p. 230 had already argued: "*Bernini verzichtet damit bewusst auf jene nach allen Seiten interessante Ansichten bietende Rundskulptur, die gegen Ausgang des 16. Jahrhunderts programmatisch war, und nähert sich dem malerischen Flächenbild.*" See also Lars 0. Larsson, *Von allen Seiten gleich schön: Studien zum Begriff der Vielansichtigkeit in der europäischen Plastik von der Renaissance bis zum Klassizismus*, Stockholm 1974.

studies for the figure of *Daniel* - and of the evidence provided by the sculptures themselves, I am obliged to contradict this thesis. My proposition that there are triple views in Bernini's sculpture implies, however, an emphatic agreement with two insights of Wittkower's. First, Wittkower himself recognised and insisted on the fact that Bernini's sculptures have fixed, picture-like views; they cannot be viewed correctly from just any point. Secondly, the viewpoint indicated by Wittkower for each of the works he discusses has priority over the others: it is the main view and should be so named. The first and third views are subsidiary views; but as such, and in the sequence of views, they have their own, quite specific value. They are not insignificant, and it is incorrect to say that "they reveal details without, however, contributing to a clarification of the overall design;"[23] on the contrary, in Bernini's figures and groups all three views contribute to an iconographical meaning that is developed through their sequence.

Concerning differences in the relation of the three views to one another, and concerning tradition and innovation. One must distinguish between four types of triple view. First, there are purely formal triple views that engender no recognisable, thematic differentiation; Krumper's *Patrona Bavariae*, as we have seen is an example of this type. Second, there are triple views that are representational as well as formal, wherein individual aspects of the content are isolated as subsidiary views; Bernini's *Aeneas* group is an example. The historical precedent for this group, as Wittkower has pointed out,[24] is Michelangelo's statue of *Christ* in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome, where the beholder stands exactly opposite the instruments of the passion in the first view, exactly opposite Christ's Herculean body in the second, and exactly opposite his mild face in the third. None of these aspects of the content detracts from the others. In Bernini's *Aeneas*, the role of the three views is accentuated in that significant details such as the Penates and, especially, Ascanius can only be seen from the right or from the left; this is not the case with Michelangelo's *Christ*. Third, there are representational triple views in which - as in Ignaz Günther's *Pietà* - three thematic aspects supersede one another. Once again a work by Michelangelo is a precedent: the *Pietà* in Florence Cathedral. In the first view, the beholder stands opposite the richly articulated body of Christ, which crumples to the ground; in the main view, the dead Christ is enclosed on all sides by human beings, taken into

[23] Wittkower, *Art and Architecture*, p. 101.
[24] Wittkower, *Bernini*, p. 3.

their circle as the Incarnation is completed in a human death; in the third view, we observe the rising and falling movement of the human beings who venerate the body. Günther's *Pietà* accentuates the distinctness of the views insofar as the beholder cannot see Christ's head in the main view; this is not the case with Michelangelo's *Pietà*. I cite Michelangelo as a precedent without considering the stylistic differences, which however are also important for grasping the nature of the triple views. The subsidiary views in Michelangelo's work are set back further into the block of marble, the shape of which remains perceptible. Bernini and Günther allow the subsidiary views to protrude further, without reference to the block. Fourth, and most important, there is another type of triple view, once again representational, in which different aspects follow one another with no possibility of simultaneity, in which spiritual or existential processes are represented or narrated in their temporal succession. The examples discussed here are Bernini's *Apollo* group and his *Daniel*. To the best of my knowledge, this type of triple view is without precedent; Bernini invented it. We also encounter it in the *Pluto* group and in the *David*, and it is decisive for his more important figures of saints.[25]

V

Let us return to Ignaz Günther and consider his *Annunciation* group of 1764 in Weyarn[26] and the group of the *Guardian Angel* made in 1763 for the Carmelite church in Munich and now in the *Bürgersaal* there.[27] Günther develops the fourth type of triple view in both of these works.

In the Annunciation group, the first view (fig. 67) is of the angel who enters, drapery fluttering to the right, and greets the Virgin bowing before him; she bends as though pierced by the rays that descend from the Holy Spirit to a point beyond her neck. In the main view (fig. 68), the angel appears to have floated down to earth; he points to the dove of the Holy Spirit, which spreads its wings above the group. The angel's wing seems to form a shade over the Virgin's head, and her right hand, extended in a gesture of acceptance, is seen be-

[25] Kuhn, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Gesammelte Beiträge*, pp. 107-126.
[26] Feu1ner, *Günther* (1920), p. 17; Feulner, *Günther* (1947), p. 91; Schoenberger, *Günther*, pp. 49sq.
[27] Feulner, *Günther* (1920), p. 30; Feulner, *Günther* (1947), p. 94; Schoenberger, *Günther*, pp. 44-46.

neath the dove. In the third view (fig. 69), the Virgin draws both hands in front of her body and toward her breast, as though to shield that which she has accepted; the angel, whose drapery now flutters both in front of him and behind him, appears to have straightened his body. The Virgin thus has three narrative moments: she bows, bending as though pierced; she yields to the Holy Spirit; she draws back into herself. The angel too has three moments: he enters and greets Mary; he pronounces the words of the Annunciation; he straightens in preparation for departure. These stages are comparable to those described in Saint Luke's gospel.[28] The self-contained character of the final view is brought out by the parallelisms between the Virgin's and the angel's drapery and by the correspondence between the Virgin's right arm and the angel's outer wing.

In the first view (fig. 70) of the *Guardian Angel* group the angel, his breast turned toward the front, has stepped protectively between the child and the snake on the ground. He holds the child firmly by hand and directs the child's glance upward with a gesture. In this view there are correspondences between the angel's billowing drapery and his left arm, between his large right wing and his pointing finger, and between the angel's finger and hair and the tip of his left wing and the curves of the drapery, neck, cheek, and cap of the child. In the main view (fig. 71), angel and child step toward the beholder. The child is now under the protective canopy of the angel's wing; the angel turns and speaks to the listening child. In the third view (fig. 72), the largest folds of the angel's drapery are hidden, but the fluttering ends of the child's drapery become visible; the angel points straight to Heaven and under his wing the child, now aligned with the movement of the drapery over the angel's left leg, follows his words. The three views thus develop three themes: the angel as earthly companion in time of need; the angel as guardian speaking to the listener; the angel as guide to heaven.[29]

This developing, narrative type of triple view was invented by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. In citing Bernini's art as a precedent for Ignaz Günther's, I am fully aware of the stylistic differences that separate the two sculptors. Günther, for example, sometimes produced self-contained groups with changing aspects merely by manipulating parallel folds of drapery, whereas Bernini relies exclu-

[28] Luke 1:28-29, 30-37, 38.

[29] Cf. the *Guardian Angel* group in the Altarpiece of Mary Magdalene by Josef Götsch (Rott am Inn, former Benedictine monastery church), executed under the influence of Günther's group, but intended to be seen only from one viewpoint.

sively on the movement of his figures' bodies. This difference follows from a difference in content: Bernini's art is always founded in emotion, passion, and pathos;[30] while Günther's may be more detached from its religious subject matter.

How the transmission from Bernini to Günther took place cannot be determined with any certainty. There is no evidence that Günther visited Rome, and a stay of his in Venice is a matter of conjecture.[31] For the time being, the only links we can suggest are engravings such as those in Domenico de Rossi's *Raccolta di statue antiche e moderne*[32], which Günther came to know at the latest during his studies at the Viennese Academy and which he would have looked at not with the dilettantish eye of an amateur but with the expert eye of a specialist[33].

---

[30] Kuhn, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Gesammelte Beiträge*, 99-102, 126-127.

[31] Woeckel, *Günther: Handzeichnugen*, p. 23.

[32] Domenico de Rossi, *Raccolta di statue antiche e moderne*, Rome 1704, reproduced almost all of Bernini's Roman figures and groups: the *Constantine* (pl. 10), the *Pluto* (pl. 68), the *Neptune* (pl. 71), the *Apollo* (pl. 81), the *David* (pl. 82), the *river gods* from the *Fontana dei Fiumi* (pls. 97-100), the *Moro* (pl. 101), the *Truth* (pl. 142), the *Urban VIII* of the Capitol (pl. 152), the *Habakkuk* (pl. 156), the *Daniel* (pl. 157), the *Longinus* (pl. 159), and the *Bibiana* (pl. 160). The notable omissions are the *Teresa*, the *Ludovica*, and the *angels* for the *Ponte Sant'Angelo*. Unlike Michelangelo's statues, Bernini's are, as a rule, represented in the main view; the *Pluto* group, shown in the first view (Fig. 23), is an exception.

[33] Some of Günther's early drawings after statues (Woeckel, *Günther: Handzeichnugen* nos. 93-95) have been lost; reproductions have presumably not survived. H. Höhn, "Die Handzeichnugen des Bildhauers Franz Ignaz Günther", *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* 1932/33, Nuremberg 1933, pp. 162 sqq. says nothing about their appearance; however, Feulner, *Günther* (1947) p. 33 notes that the statues were "modelled nervously with cross-hatching" ("*mit gekreuzter Schraffur ängstlich modelliert*") and that movements were "clumsily reproduced" ("*unbeholfen wiedergegeben*"). Two of these statues - the *Meleager* and Michelangelo's *Bacchus* (Woeckel, *Günther: Handzeichnungen*, nos. 93, 95) - are reproduced in Rossi (*Raccolta*, pls. 141, 46) in the first view and the third view, respectively. Since cross-hatching is rather untypical of Günther but used extensively in the engravings, and since movements are without exception clumsily reproduced in these engravings, we must consider the possibility that Günther's drawings were copies, not after plaster casts, as has hitherto been assumed, but after engravings.

List of Illustrations[1]

[1] Numbers prefixed with RZ refer to *Raphaels Zeichnungen*, ed. by Oskar Fischel and Konrad Oberhuber, Berlin 1913 sqq. Numbers prefixed with B refer to Ludwig Burchard, R.-A. d'Hulst, *Rubens Drawings*, Brussels 1963. Numbers prefixed with H refer to Julius S. Held, *Rubens. Selected Drawings*, London 1959. Numbers prefixed with HOISK refer to Julius S. Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens*, Princeton 1980