The World of Savonarola
Italian élites and perceptions of crisis

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16

Raphael's *School of Athens* and the artist of the modern manner

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> ... in Raphael, painted ideas, painted and visible philosophy, are for once as beautiful as Plato thought they must be, if one truly apprehended them.
>
> (Walter Pater)[1]

Whatever we may intend by the term 'High Renaissance', one monument in particular has come to epitomise the concept, to embody the complex of values associated with that historical phenomenon: the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican (Fig. 16.1). This was the first major project assigned to Raphael upon his arrival in Rome toward the end of 1508. The intellectual ambitions of a culture seem fully figured in the room that served Pope Julius II as study and home to his private library.[2] The programme of the Stanza is clearly declared by the quadripartite design of the vault (Fig. 16.2), radiating from the heavenly backdrop of its oculus, in which an angelic flock sustains the papal arms. Surrounding that octagonal centre, depending from it, four personifications announce the basic rubrics that order this painted world, four intellectual faculties: Philosophy and Theology, Poetry and Jurisprudence (figured by Justice), and these in turn are inflected and related by mediating narratives. On the walls below each of the roundels the relevant faculty is pictorially expounded or, more accurately, enacted.

Below the figure of Philosophy (Fig. 16.3), with her promised knowledge of causes, of things both moral and natural, is the fresco known as the *School of Athens* (Fig. 16.4), already known as such in the late seventeenth century, when Giovanni Pietro Bellori, who clearly recognised its theme, offered as title

[1] 'Raphael' (1892), in *The Renaissance*, ed. K. Clark (Cleveland and New York, 1961), p. 158.

[2] On the room's original function, see J. Shearman, 'The Vatican Stanze. Functions and decorations, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 57 (1971), pp. 369-424

'Ginnasio di Atene, ovvero la Filosofia'.[3] Like the adjacent *Parnassus* (Fig. 16.5), which features Apollo and the Muses and figures the long history of poetry beginning with Homer and Sappho, the *School of Athens* embodies the very notion of Renaissance, the re-animation of the creative minds of classical antiquity.[4] To represent Philosophy, Raphael adapts the traditional assembly of *uomini illustri*, conceiving what amounts to a fully illustrated Diogenes Laertius, even if we cannot quite identify all the philosophers. The challenge to do so, of course, has provoked observers at least since the mid-sixteenth century, when Vasari's memory failed him in his attempt to describe and interpret the painting, confusing, as he did, philosophers with theologians, Pythagoras with St Matthew; nor have some very recent modern suggestions been more persuasive.[5]

Another, consequent and more interesting challenge has been that of the larger programme behind the room's decoration, the *School of Athens* in particular. We have come to see the Stanza della Segnatura within the rich rhetorical context of Renaissance Rome, measuring its imagery against the oratory of the papal court, the publicly expressed sense of *renovatio* and the fulfilment of a Christian Golden Age under Julius II. The words of the orators - of Battista Casali, Egidio da Viterbo and Tommaso Inghirami - are adduced to offer us a contemporaneous vocabulary for understanding the function and meaning of Raphael's frescoes. The text most frequently cited in this regard is Egidio da Viterbo's 'Sententiae ad mentem Platonis', and it does indeed read like an explanatory commentary on the *School of Athens*, especially its central pairing of 'the two princes of philosophy' (Bellori), establishing as a governing theme of the fresco the *concordia Platonis et Aristotelis*. The painter himself was hardly in a position to read Egidio's 'Sententiae', and Inghirami has been suggested as a likely mediator and adviser in this project of decorating the Stanza 'ad praescriptum Iulii pontificis'.[6]

[3] G.P. Bellori, *Descrizione delle immagini dipinte da Raffaello d'Urbino nelle camere del Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano* (Rome, 1695). An English translation by A. Sedgwick Wohl of the passage on the *School of Athens* is published in M. Hall (ed.), *Raphael's School of Athens* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 48-56.

[4] The literature on the *School of Athens*, like that on the Stanza itself, is extensive. Recent, though by no means complete, bibliographies may be found in *Raffaello nell'Appartamento di Giulio II e Leone X* (Milan, 1993), pp. 349-50, and in Hall (ed.), *Raphael's School of Athens*, pp. 171-5. Results of the recent restoration campaign have been published by A. Nesselrath, *Raphael's School of Athens* (Vatican City, 1996).

[5] See, for example, G.W. Most, 'Reading Raphael: *The School of Athens* and its pre-text', *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1996), pp. 145-82, and, especially egregious, D.O. Bell, 'New identifications in Raphael's *School of Athens*', *Art Bulletin* 77 (1995), pp. 639-46; see as well C.L. Joost-Gaugier, 'Ptolemy and Strabo and their conversation with Apelles and Protogenes: cosmography and painting in Raphael's *School of Athens*', *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998), pp. 761-87.

[6] Paolo Giovio, writing before the Sack of 1527: 'Pinxit in Vaticano nec adhuc stabili

Questions of responsibility attend any discussion of the Stanza della Segnatura: How detailed a set of instructions did Raphael receive? How closely was his progress supervised? How do we account for the changes in content as well as form indicated by the preserved preparatory drawings? How quickly might the young painter have demonstrated his abilities, earning increased respect for his intelligence as well as claiming for himself greater inventive licence? These are questions that affect also our understanding of the other great projects undertaken in Julian Rome: Bramante's monumental conception of a new St Peter's and Michelangelo's redecoration of the vault of the Sistine Chapel and his frustrated project for the tomb. To whom do we assign ultimate responsibility for these works, the patron or the artist? And what, indeed, do we mean by responsibility? Who claims the role of inventor?[7]

The thesis I intend to argue is that, whatever literary and rhetorical guidance he undoubtedly received, Raphael, the painter himself, is, in the final analysis, the true *inventor* of this grandly populated *summa* of Renaissance intellectual values.[8] I hope to demonstrate that in this fresco meaning is a function of pictorial structure and of what was termed *eloquenza corporale*.

Beyond its intellectual content, its larger programmatic ambitions and the detail of its iconography, the pictorial form itself of the Stanza della Segnatura has come to epitomise our aesthetic understanding of the High Renaissance. Raphael's figural language represents that precious moment of formal perfection we call classical; his figures hold that precarious balance between nature and art which, according to the lessons of art history, cannot be

authoritate cubicula duo ad praescriptum Iulii Pontificis, in altero novem Musae Apollini cythara canenti applaudunt ...'; V. Golzio, *Raffaello nei documenti, nelle testimonianze dei contemporanei e nella letteratura del suo secolo* (Vatican City, 1936), p. 192. For the significance of Egidio da Viterbo, see especially H. Pfeiffer, *Zur Ikonographie von Raffaels Disputa. Egidio da Viterbo und die christlich-platonische Konzeption der Stanza della Segnatura* (Rome, 1975); most recently, see I.D. Rowland, 'The intellectual background of the *School of Athens*. Tracking divine wisdom in the room of Julius II', in Hall (ed.), *Raphael's School of Athens*, pp. 131-70, and, more generally, Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance. Ancients and moderns in sixteenth-century Rome* (Cambridge, 1998), esp. pp. 141-92. Our understanding of the role of papal oratory in articulating the culture of High Renaissance Rome owes much to the work of J.W. O'Malley: *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform. A study in Renaissance thought* (Leiden, 1968), *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome. Rhetoric, doctrine, and reform in the sacred orators of the papal court, c. 1450-1521* (Durham, N.C., 1979), and his studies collected in *Rome and the Renaissance. Studies in culture and religion* (London, 1981).

[7] For recent consideration of Julian patronage see C. Shaw, *Julius II. The warrior pope* (Oxford, 1993), esp. pp. 189-207, and Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance*. A broad, cautionary survey of the issues is offered by C. Hope, 'Artists, patrons, and advisers in the Italian Renaissance', in G. Fitch Lytle and S. Orgel (eds), *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 293-343.

[8] For a particularly rich and relevant consideration of these issues, see M. Schwartz, 'Raphael's authorship in the *Expulsion of Heliodorus*', *Art Bulletin* 79 (1997), pp. 467-92.

maintained for long. It is this dimension of the *School of Athens* that I propose to address: the art of the painting and the artist in it. For Raphael's fresco registers both a moment of classical perfection and its incipient disintegration, as it figures, quite literally (and precociously), a fundamental shift in the Renaissance conception of the artist and his art.

Vasari celebrated the narrative clarity of Raphael's art, his ability to 'figurare le storie', which were recognised as eminently legible: 'simili alli scritti'.[9] That legibility informs Raphael's first great works in Rome. Even as they require it for their full understanding, these compositions offer instruction in what we might call visual literacy. Basic pictorial intelligence is what renders Raphael's imagery readable. His mural manifests its essential meaning through design, through compositional structure. If, as proper art historians, we can hardly accept Heinrich Wölfflin's insistence that 'historical learning is not essential for the understanding of these frescoes', we can nonetheless agree that 'the real value of these pictures ... is to be sought in the general disposition, the articulation of the whole and the rhythm and animation of the treatment of space.'[10]

The semicircular field of the *School of Athens* is clearly divided, vertically and horizontally. The upper zone of the composition is reserved for the monumental vaulted architecture that establishes the grandeur of the setting and its antiquity. To either side the marmoreal effigies of Apollo and Minerva stand, respectively, for music and wisdom, in all their resonant implications; the dominant positions of these statues, however, are seriously modified by their marginal placement and their artificial substance. The gathering of living philosophers is confined to the lower half of the design and is itself significantly divided: left and right, by the paired master and disciple, Plato and Aristotle; high and low, by the stairs that run across the composition. A basic semiotic matrix is thus established, articulating the field into distinct zones and assigning relative weight to each. The governing system of values is generated by and out of the two central protagonists, as Raphael creates meaning through his subtly inflected representation of the human body.

Whatever instructions he may have received, the painter here speaks his own, figural language, through which he gives formal expression to fundamental aspects of the two governing philosophies (Fig. 16.6). Plato and Aristotle are distinguished in every aspect: generationally and chromatically, sartorially and tonsorially, posturally and gesturally. Older Plato, unkempt and barefoot, rises on his toes, the very profile of his simple garments affirming his instability; his entire body ascends, flame-like, following the lead of his

[9] G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. G. Milanesi (Florence, 1878-85), IV, pp. 344, 12.

[10] H. Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, tr. P. and L. Murray (London, 1952), pp. 87-8.

heavenward indication. Virile and courtly Aristotle, his beard neatly trimmed, stands firmly planted on the ground in his gilded sandals, his robes, too, trimmed in gold; his vigorous gesture reaches out, horizontally, parallel to the earth.

The clear legibility of Raphael's figures is attested by Bellori's reading of them. He recognises that 'the sign of [Plato's] great doctrine is the gesture of his raised right hand, pointing to Heaven and the supreme cause, since this philosopher in the *Timaeus* contemplates the nature of the universe and natural things mysteriously as effects and images of things divine.' Next to Plato 'stands his great disciple and master of wise men, Aristotle', who holds 'his book entitled *Ethics* or the moral philosophy of human behaviour, and he too makes himself understood by the gesture of his right hand, which is not raised up but extended forward in the gesture of the peacemaker. This gesture is properly suitable to ethics, which calms the emotions and moderates human souls with the proportion of virtue; in this way these two great philosophers correspond to the present image of philosophy, divided in two parts, natural and moral.'[11] Bellori knew how to read Raphael's figural language.

However deep or shallow his understanding of the actual philosophical traditions, Raphael knew how to translate them into his own, visual language; his art, after all, was one dedicated precisely to figuring concepts, bodying forth ideas. The painter chorcographed his two philosophers according to a basic contrast of vertical and horizontal; that organising principle extends to the cut of their beards and clothes but is marked most graphically in the relative positions of their books. Indeed, reading Raphael's figures, we hardly need the titular notations of *Timaeus* and *Ethics* to know the distinction between these philosophers, or to associate them respectively with the natural and moral causes announced in the personification above. That distinction, however, is harmonised in the *concordia* of the two: they are reconciled pictorially, united by the common arch that, springing in effect from the upraised finger of Plato, sets them off from all the others, framing them against a celestial blue and centralising them in the larger structure of the full composition. Plato and Aristotle 'alone', as Bellori recognised, 'are set against the open sky with such force and distinctness, that the eye immediately perceives them in their primacy and recognises them as the masters and princes of philosophy.'

Generated from this figural core, the rest of the design extends the implications of the two key philosophical traditions outward and downward: from Plato down to the Pythagorean group at the lower left (Fig. 16.7), from Aristotle down to the Euclidean group at the lower right (Fig. 16.8). Graphically, we move from the closed but titled books to the diagrammatic

[11] With some modifications, I cite the translation of Sedgwick Wohl in Hall (ed.), *Raphael's School of Athens*.

attributes of the open slates, which reflect their sources in both content and form: that identifying Pythagoras, teacher of Timaeus, diagrams the *tetractys* of basic harmonic ratios (1+2+3+4=10), and is held upright; that upon which Euclid (or, according to Bellori, Archimedes) spreads his dividers over a geometric construction lies flat upon the pavement, significantly the lowest object in the entire composition.

The flight of stairs running across the field and dividing the figured zone separates the mathematicians in the lower foreground from the elevated level of pure philosophy, the originating figures of Plato and Aristotle. Those dividing steps are mediated by the sprawling figure of Diogenes and by the ascending anonymous disciples; these enact, however differently, a transition between the two levels. Again, Bellori proves a sensitive reader: 'Among the followers of Aristotle', he observes of the pedagogic group of geometers, Raphael represented 'in lively fashion their propensity and affection for study. He depicted one of these disciples who, having graduated from the lower level, from the school of Archimedes [*sic*], as though having completed [the study of] mathematics, turns upward toward philosophy'. Bellori admires the conception of this ascending figure dressed in white, 'in which Raphael expressed the ancient custom of the Greeks, who rose step by step from mathematics to the speculative sciences.'[12] It seems only appropriate that, toward the end of the seventeenth century, Bellori should find a kind of post-Poussin sense of *concetto* in Raphael's figured *istoria*, for his imputation of symbolic meaning to gesture and pose is perfectly consonant with the corporeal eloquence of this art.

The upper level of the *School of Athens*, dominated by the framed masters, represents the realm of ideas, of purer knowledge, of the world's creation and its laws. The lower groups, Pythagorean and Euclidean, represent a more sensate knowledge, the kind that in *Della pittura* Leon Battista Alberti had termed 'la più grassa Minerva'[13] - that is, knowledge of number and form,

[12] Matthias Winner has discussed these *gradini* in terms of the ascent from sensibile perception of things physical to the *intelligibilia*: see 'Progetti ed esecuzione nella Stanza della Segnatura', *Raffaello nell'Appartamento di Giulio II e Leone X*, pp. 247-91, esp. p. 268. See also the reading of C.G. Stridbeck, *Raphael Studies. A puzzling passage in Vasari's* Vite (Stockholm, 1960), who recognises in the two levels a distinction between theory and practice. The gentle ascension of the youth on the steps may be compared to the youth in the *Disputa* who, turning gently from the rational debate in the lower left of that composition, innocently indicates the divinely manifested truth upon the altar, a figural enactment of faith. See D. Rosand, 'Raphael and the Pictorial Generation of Meaning', *Source. Notes in the history of art* 5:1 (1985), pp. 38-43, further elaborated in '"Divinità di cosa dipinta". Pictorial structure and the legibility of the altarpiece', in P. Humfrey and M. Kemp (eds), *The Altarpiece in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 143-64.

[13] L.B. Alberti, *De pictura*, ed. C. Grayson (Rome and Bari, 1975). 'A more sensate wisdom' is the translation of J.R. Spencer, who discusses the concept in his introduction to *On*

measurable quantities that render divine ideality perceptible, accessible on earth. Pythagorean consonances make manifest that divine order of the body of the world, as described by Timaeus, 'harmonised by proportion', that musical order of the spheres symbolised by the marble figure of Apollo, the higher, ultimate cause of which is indicated by Plato.[14] The Aristotelian concern with 'the philosophy of human nature', that is, with knowledge of things of this world, extends to the measuring activities of the astrologer Zoroaster and the royal astronomer Ptolemy, who accompany the demonstrating geometer. Bending over his slate with enviable *sprezzatura*, Euclid is surrounded by eager young disciples, figural affirmation of the pedagogic responsibilities of philosophy. In this graceful balding figure, Vasari reports, were to be recognised the features of the architect Donato Bramante, Raphael's fellow Urbinate and companion, guide, and agent upon the painter's arrival in Rome.[15] Indeed, in the grand architectural conception of the *School of Athens* it is hard not to see, as did Vasari, the inspiration of Bramante, who was conceiving a new St Peter's on just such an antique imperial scale. Once again, Bellori anticipates with a certain precision our art-historical recognition in his enthusiastic appreciation of 'the noble edifice of the Gymnasium, depicted in the form of a most magnificent temple, which preserves a first idea of the Basilica of the Vatican, ... the crossing of the naves, the pilasters, and the arches that support the drum, and the curve of the cupola.'[16] Raphael's own acknowledgement of his debt to the architect is marked by his abbreviated signature inscribed on the collar of the geometer: 'R.V.S.M.' (*Raphael Vrbinas Sua Manu*).[17] Even more professionally significant, however, is the self-portrait

Painting (New Haven, 1956), pp. 18-20.

[14] Drawing upon Pythagorean tradition, which viewed geometry as a base from which to aspire to a higher world, Ficino wrote, 'There are two ways, especially, to understand the truth of divine things, namely, mathematics and the purity of the soul. Therefore, these two things which one must attend to Pythagoras understands as geometrical things through the figure, as arithmetical through the *tribulum*, and as divine worship (consisting of the purification of the soul) through the altar.' See C.S. Celenza, 'Pythagoras in the Renaissance: the case of Marsilio Ficino', *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999), pp. 667-711 - passage cited on p. 694. On the relevance of Pythagorean consonances in the visual arts, see R. Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* 4th edn (New York, 1971), pp. 101-61, esp. pp. 117-26 for Raphael's fresco. For the wider context, see S.K. Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony. Pythagorean cosmology and Renaissance poetics* (San Marino, CA, 1974), and L. Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony* (Baltimore, 1963).

[15] Vasari, *Le vite*, IV, pp. 159, 331.

[16] The identification of the so-called Janus Quadrifons as a model for Raphael's painted architecture, recently revived by Most ('Reading Raphael', pp. 173-6), remains unconvincing. For a more general consideration of the setting, see R.E. Lieberman, 'The architectural background', in Hall (ed.), *Raphael's School of Athens*, pp. 64-84.

[17] See D. Redig de Campos, 'La firma siglata di Raffaello nella Scuola d'Atene', *Arti figurativi* 1 (1945), p. 151, and 'Il concetto platonico-cristiano della Stanza della Segnatura', in *Raffaello e Michelangelo. Studi di storia e d'arte* (Rome, 1956), pp. 15-16. Following Vasari's lead, Redig de Campos goes on to suggest further identities in the fresco, recognising the features of Leonardo in the face of Plato, an identity ultimately based on the supposed self-portrait red chalk drawing in Turin, a not unproblematic drawing for reasons of style and technique as well as physiognomy.

Raphael added at the extreme right, along with that of a companion, possibly his master Perugino or Sodoma, the painter he succeeded in the Stanza: two Renaissance artists in apparent dialogue with the astronomers of antiquity, brothers in this fraternity of measurers of heaven and earth.

By such inclusion Raphael affirmed the position of the painter first argued by Alberti in 1435, in his novel humanist treatise on painting. It was through its dependence upon geometry, the basis of the recently invented artificial perspective, that painting could claim new intellectual status, as a liberal rather than a mechanical art, an operation of the mind as well as of the hand. The important value of perspective involved not so much illusionism *per se* but rather the commensurability of the system - *commensuratio* was the term Piero della Francesca used for his *prospectiva pingendi*.[18] It is entirely understandable that credit for the invention of the new perspective should have been assigned to the architect responsible for reintroducing commensurability into building design: Brunelleschi's programmatic reclamation of the semicircular Roman arch was itself a powerful critique of the Gothic pointed arch, a rejection of just that quality that rendered Gothic style so flexible: its *in*commensurability.[19] However transcendent medieval aesthetics and its worship of an order founded on 'measure and number and weight', Gothic *quadratura* remained essentially practical, the applied geometry of the masons.[20] The Renaissance architect identified more insistently and programmatically with the theory that makes a higher order accessible to the rational mind as well as to the perceiving eye. In perspective construction, controlled and predictable proportionality of spacial recession and dimensional diminution was assured by the rule of geometry.

[18] Of the three parts of painting ('disegno, commensuratio et colorare'), Piero declares, 'intendo tracta[re] solo de la commensuratione, quale diciamo prospectiva, mescolandoci qualche parte de desegno, perciò che senza non se po dimostrare in opera essa prospectiva' (*De prospectiva pingendi*, ed. G. Nicco-Fasola (Florence, 1984), pp. 63-4).

[19] On the significance of commensurability, see especially R. Wittkower, 'Brunelleschi and "Proportion in Perspective"', *JWCI* 16 (1953), pp. 275-91, reprinted in *Idea and Image. Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1978), pp. 125-35.

[20] For the practical aspects of Gothic *maconerie* and measuring *ad quadratum* or *ad triangulum*, see P. Frankl, *The Gothic. Literary sources and interpretations through eight centuries* (Princeton, 1960), esp. pp. 35-86. But, for the higher significance of 'measure and number and weight' in medieval aesthetics, cf. O. von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral. Origins of Gothic architecture and the Medieval concept of order*, 3rd edn (Princeton, 1988), esp. pp. 3-58. On the more theoretical role of proportional measure in Renaissance architectural thought and practice, see Wittkower, *Architectural Principles*.

On Euclid's slate in the *School of Athens* is a diagram of two intersecting isosceles triangles, crossed by diagonals and accompanied by the proportional indications 1/2 and 1/3. Related to Pythagorian harmonic ratios rather than to any Euclidean (or Archimidean) canon, the pattern has been suggested as a key to the pictorial construction of Raphael's 'harmonic' architectural setting, and a more or less convincing fit is possible to impose upon the composition.[21] But even without the diagram, the fundamental relevance of mathematics to pictorial construction is declared by the self-portrait (Fig. 16.9), the painter's own deliberate association with geometry, the mathematics of form. Here, admittedly at the very margin of the lowest form of knowledge, Raphael stands as the realisation of Alberti's Renaissance programme: the painter who has earned his intellectual status through mastery of mathematics, the rational basis of his art. More than just a tool for setting the architectural stage, geometry proves an element integral to Raphael's pictorial imagination, a genuinely pictorial means of generating meaning.[22]

Across the modest width of the Stanza della Segnatura the deepest resonance sounds in the facing geometries of the *School of Athens* and the *Disputa* (Fig. 16.10), the confrontation of Philosophy and Theology. Each composition responds to the basic semicircular field in a significantly different way. Within each, the central axis is marked by the apex of the frame. In the *Disputa* that axis is the positive core of the composition and, therefore, of meaning, manifest in the golden descent of the Holy Trinity through a series of diminishing circles: from the apsidal dome of Heaven radiating behind God the Father, through the diminishing circles surrounding the Son and the dove of the

[21] See S. Valtieri, 'La Scuola d'Atene: "Bramante" suggerisce un nuovo metodo per costruire in prospettiva un'architettura armonica', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 16 (1972), pp. 63-72. The first of the ratios, 1:2, is indeed harmonic, representing an octave (marked *diapason* in the diagram on the Pythagorean slate), but the ratio 1:3 requires some special pleading; generating the arithmetic progress 1:2:3, it yields the complex of an octave (1:2) plus a fifth (2:3). The effort to relate the diagram to Raphael's pictorial construction, based on the initial work of E. Bentivoglio and S. Valtieri, was first reported in A. Bruschi, *Bramante architetto* (Bari, 1969), pp. 1036-9, and figs. 485-7. These results were further elaborated in K. Oberhuber, *Polarität und Synthese in Raphaels 'Schule von Athen'* (Stuttgart, 1983), pp. 55-60, 121-3, figs. 1-4, but were challenged by R. Fichtner, *Die verborgene Geometrie in Raffaels 'Schule von Athen'* (Munich, 1984), pp. 13-22, 102. A rather optimistic attempt to key the spatial disposition of Raphael's figures to the Euclidean diagram was made by W. Welliver, 'Symbolic meaning in Leonardo's and Raphael's painted architecture', *Art Quarterly* 2 (1979), pp. 37-66, esp. 55-8.

[22] Reviewing the traditional representations of geometry, Matthias Winner rather programmatically associates the constructive aspects of Raphael's imagery with Augustine's *Civitas Dei*: see 'Disputa und Schule von Athen', in *Raffaello a Roma* (Rome, 1986), pp. 29-45; 'Progetti ed esecuzione nella Stanza della Segnatura', in C. Pietrangeli et al., *Raffaello nell'appartamento*, pp. 247-91; 'Der Architekt inh. Raffaels *Schule von Athen*', in C.L. Striker (ed.), *Architectural Studies in Memory of Richard Krautheimer* (Mainz, 1996), pp. 181-5.

Holy Spirit, down to the smallest circle of the monstrance displaying the Eucharistic wafer, which rises above the horizon even as it is based on the altar which is the Church on earth (and prominently declaring Julius II Pontifex Maximus).

'God is a sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.' That Empedoclean axiom announces the privileged position of the circle in the symbolic geometry of the religious imagination, an eternal form with neither beginning nor end, the perfect representation of the divine. It is the form of the universe created in the *Timaeus* (34b): 'smooth and even, having a surface in every direction equidistant from the centre, a body entire and perfect.'[23] Nowhere does that symbolic geometry find fuller pictorial expression than in Raphael's fresco. Pictorial expression, but also pictorial inflection: in the foreshortened semicircle of the cumulus embankment supporting the saintly court the ideality of the golden circle is subject to visual distortion; in this intermediate zone between earth and heaven, between mortality and immortality, the laws of natural vision still obtain, and pure geometric form must yield to the deformations of perspective.[24] On earth a different geometric form holds sway. 'To earth,' says Plato's Timaeus, 'let us assign the cubic form, for earth is the most immovable of the four [elements]...' (55d-e). In the *Disputa* the altar itself, in its rectangularity, declares the essential geometry of earth. Like the circles descending to it, the altar presents itself as pure form, an undistorted quadrilateral, seen frontally, *in maestà*. And just that formal purity serves as measure of the receding distortions of the rectangular pavement pattern, the clearest manifestation of natural perspective under geometric rule.

In his more accurate and circumstantial response to the *Disputa*, Vasari spoke reverentially of the 'divinità di cosa dipinta',[25] and it would indeed be difficult to imagine a clearer articulation of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Raphael's painted theology makes itself immediately apprehensible; theological truth is made manifest through the intelligent and imaginative application of *prospectiva pingendi*. The rules of perspective, the mathematics of foreshortening, are here creatively invoked; their very operations generate meaning, even as those operations are transcended by a higher order of being and the undistorted clarity of divine vision.

What we might term a pictorial humanism here gives visible form to divine truth through the symbolism of geometry. The symbolic values associated with the circle and the square, respectively the formal epitomes of heaven and earth,

[23] The sources and tradition are reviewed by D. Mahnke, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt. Beitrage zur Genealogie der mathematischen Mystik* (Halle, 1937).

[24] I have offered a fuller structural analysis of the *Disputa* in 'Raphael and the pictorial generation of meaning' and '"Divinità di cosa dipinta"', cited above, n. 12.

[25] Vasari, *Le vite*, IV, p. 336.

inform the essential structure of the *Disputa*, differentiating its higher and lower zones with immediate clarity, yet utmost subtlety. With greater concentration, these values resonate in the most eloquent graphic realisation of human proportions according to Vitruvius: Leonardo's drawing of the Vitruvian canon (Fig. 16.11), relating the human body to the geometric perfection of both circle and square.[26] Any reader of Platonic or Christian persuasion, returning a symbolic dimension to Vitruvian canon, could not but find in the joining of circle and square in the frame of man suggestion of the union of soul and body. Leonardo's drawing reads as a graphic demonstration of that essential aspect of the unique creature granted an immortal soul within the mortal body, the breath of divinity in man. And the squaring of the circle - that vain mathematical pursuit to which Leonardo devoted so much energy and in which he suffered inevitable frustration - might itself assume incredible consequence: as a geometric demonstration of the divine nature of man. Geometry seemed to offer a means of apprehending the truth of creation, a first level of rational understanding.

Geometry returns us to the *School of Athens* and to the signifying structure of its composition. In contrast to the *Disputa*, in which the central vertical axis is the very locus of the picture's meaning - the descent of encircled figures of the Trinity along that golden co-ordinate giving it body, linking heaven and earth - in contrast to that very positive and unifying core, the central axis of the *School of Athens* is essentially negative and disjunctive: it divides the field in half, distinguishing Platonic and Aristotelian sides. That duality is punctuated by the two columns high above the philosophers, like them silhouetted against blue sky. It is further emphasised by the centrifugal orientation of the officiating statues at the sides of the composition, each attentive to its adjacent mural. Instead of unity, the absolute truth of theology, the *School of Athens* more appropriately offers a fundamentally dialogic situation, an orchestrated chorus of various voices, only one of whom, Plato the master, publicly acknowledges the higher wisdom that ultimately governs and unites their efforts.

Another of those voices, this one disparate, significantly silent, belongs to the massive figure filling the foreground just to the left of centre (Fig. 16.12). A uniquely asocial being in this otherwise gregarious gathering, he sits isolated, like the block that serves as his support, drafted and fully formed yet out of place with regard to both architectural setting and orthogonal perspective. Absent from the preserved cartoon, this philosopher was indeed a later addition. Raphael returned to the fresco after its completion, reopened the

[26] On this drawing, see M. Murray, 'Leonardo e Vitruvio', in S. Danesi Squarzina (ed.), *Roma, centro ideale della cultura dell'antico nei secoli XV e XVI. Da Martino V al Sacco di Roma 1417-1527* (Milan, 1989), pp. 210-14; also *Leonardo & Venezia*, exh. cat. (Milan, 1992), no. 12, with further bibliography.

surface, replastered, and on the fresh *intonaco* painted this figure ***a buon fresco***. Bellori had already recognised its anomalous character; without identifying him, he described 'the meditation of [this] philosopher, who sits and leans on his elbow, with one hand under his cheek, the other holding a pen', and he understood this pose to 'manifest his inner thought.' Bellori goes on to describe him as wearing a 'sagum, with his boot tops turned down from his bare knees: in this abbreviated costume he differs from the other cloaked figures in the *Gymnasium*.' We have come to identify this brooding author as the melancholic Heraclitus, an identity perfectly consistent with his deeply introspective nature, for which he has aptly been dubbed 'il Pensieroso'. His later addition by Raphael, suggesting at the very least a certain programmatic openness, seems a formal response to the invitation of the empty foreground space of the original composition. The dynamic contrapposto relationship of the newcomer to the insouciant Diogenes does indeed lend new animation to that central foreground.

Out of place within the social intercourse of Raphael's choreographed company, alone and closed into himself, this pensive creature rejects all social awareness or response; even disdainful Diogenes extends his body into surrounding space. Heavier and larger than the others, by his very pose this interloper further denies himself potential movement, immobilised by his own crossed limbs. We need hardly invoke physiognomy to recognise him as, in every sense, Michelangelesque, although physiognomy is hardly irrelevant here.[27] It is the very conception of the figure that attests to Raphael's response to the art of Michelangelo, most explicitly to the prophet Jeremiah from the Sistine ceiling (Fig. 16.13). The most massive of the Sistine prophets, Jeremiah weighs heavily upon himself, brooding and lost in meditation; immobilised by his own crossed legs, he too is the only one among his prophetic peers who is not barefoot.

As a footnote, we might recall that contemporary biographers make a point of recording Michelangelo's *stivaletti*. Vasari identifies them more precisely as of dogskin; both he and Condivi record that the artist actually slept in these boots, wearing them for months at a time, and so when he finally removed them they took his own skin with them.[28] And we might recall as well Michelangelo's own sense of disdainful isolation, expressed in his self-description in a letter of October 1509: 'I am living here in a state of great

[27] The modern identification as Michelangelo was first argued by D. Redig de Campos, 'Il "Pensieroso" della Segnatura', in *Michelangelo Buonarroti nel IV centenario del Giudizio universale (1541-1941)* (Florence, 1942), pp. 205-19, reprinted in his *Raffaello e Michelangelo*, pp. 83-98. For further discussion, see D. Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 116-17.

[28] Vasari, *Le vite*, VII, p. 285; A. Condivi, *La vita di Michelangelo*, ed. P. D'Ancona (Milan, 1928), pp. 194-5.

anxiety and of the greatest physical fatigue; I have no friends of any sort and I don't want any.'[29] The complaint will find poetic expression in his famous sonnet on the difficulties of painting the Sistine ceiling: 'I've already grown a goitre at this drudgery, / as the water gives the cats in Lombardy ...' ('I' ho già fatto un gozzo in questo stento, / come fa l'acqua a' gatti in Lombardia').[30]

Inspired by the Sistine prophet, Raphael's Heraclitus pays tribute to both the invention and the inventor. Despite it being a second thought, however, this figure is no mere space-filler. Whatever the formal reasons for introducing him, the conceptual intelligence of the *School of Athens*, its essential legibility and its syntactic symmetries, requires and assures his ultimate thematic relevance. Set prominently below Plato, he is, by proximity at least, associated with the Pythagorean group. That the Heraclitan philosophy of flux might seem to question the epistemological order that is a binding principle of the entire gathering would actually represent an intellectual position appropriate to his physical disaffection. Distinguished from the others by his heavy proportions, dark physiognomy and introverted contrapposto, as well as by his costume, this antisocial being seems quite comfortable in his isolation.

However difficult Raphael's relations with the jealous Michelangelo, his own generosity and graciousness in this tribute would seem to confirm Vasari's professional hagiography, in which, at least on a rhetorical level, the history of art progresses by divine intervention: 'Nature made a gift of Raphael to the world,' Vasari declares, only 'after it had been vanquished by art through the hand of Michelangelo and was ready, through Raphael, to be vanquished by character and social comportment as well as by art.'[31] The *terribilità* of the one needed to be countered by the *grazia* of the other. Raphael himself surely recognised in the older master a very different personality. In the *School of Athens*, then, the brooding melancholic may be read professionally, in relation to his counterpart at the other side of the composition: that is, to Raphael the painter among the measurers. And that juxtaposition registers awareness of a major shift in aesthetic attitude.

[29] Tr. E.H. Ramsden, *The Letters of Michelangelo* (Stanford, 1963), no. 51.

[30] *Michelangelo Buonarroti: Rime*, ed. E. Noè Girardi (Bari, 1960), no. 5; tr. J.M. Saslow, *The Poetry of Michelangelo* (New Haven and London, 1991), p. 70.

[31] Vasari, *Le vite*, IV, p. 315: 'Di costui fece dono al mondo la natura, quando vinto dall'arte per mano di Michelagnolo Buonarroti, volle in Raffaello esser vinta dall'arte e dai costumi insieme.' Also on Vasari's life of Raphael, see P.L. Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari. Art and history* (New Haven and London, 1995), pp. 359-401. Mary D. Garrard has suggested a more - perhaps too - programmatic intention in Raphael's portrayal of Michelangelo: the completion of the three *arti del disegno* by the addition of sculpture to the already represented painting (Raphael's self-portrait) and architecture (Euclid/Bramante): see 'The Liberal Arts and Michelangelo's first project for the tomb of Julius II (with a coda on Raphael's 'School of Athens')', *Viator* 15 (1984): 335-76, esp. 366-76.

Following Vasari and, indeed, Michelangelo himself, as quoted by Condivi, we fully appreciate Raphael's stylistic epiphany upon viewing the Sistine Chapel: 'mutò subito maniera.'[32] But more is involved here than the stylistic development of the maturing painter. Raphael, the creator of subtly articulate figures, brought his own visual literacy to the reading of the figures of others, especially to the extraordinary population animating the vault of the Sistine Chapel. Responsive to this new display of expressive power, the younger artist clearly comprehended the fuller implications of Michelangelo's invention. Raphael's Heraclitus sits in deep meditation, his pen poised above paper, the author pausing in his writing, waiting for renewed inspiration. Like Michelangelo's tragic prophet, Raphael's melancholic philosopher awaits the intervention of a higher power. Jeremiah will be called from his internal meditation by the word of God, as surely as his prophetic brethren, Ezechiel and Isaiah (Fig. 16.14) - or Moses - are called away from meditation to a more direct contemplation of the word.[33] Raphael understood the prolepsis inherent in Jeremiah's pose, the anticipation of the divine interruption that will fill the expectant vessel of the seer.

Plato's gesture in Raphael's fresco makes clear that all human knowledge - or art - derives from that higher source. On the adjacent wall, on the Platonic/Apollonian side of the *School of Athens*, Apollo himself holds court on *Parnassus* (Fig. 16.15), surrounded by the Muses, reigning over the personified history of poetry from antiquity to the early Cinquecento present. No statue here, the ancient god of poetry is fully fleshed; he is on the same level as the incarnate God of the *Disputa*, with whom he shares his modest male nudity. Like the gathering of ancient philosophers, this hilltop academy of poets figures the intellectual and cultural ambition of Renaissance syncretism, its programmatic appropriation for Christian truth of the wisdom of ancient pagan cultures. The operative dynamic in this fresco, the crucial pivot, is epitomised in the eloquent exchange between Dante and Virgil, looking to one another beyond their ultimate epic model, blind Homer. As Ernst Robert Curtius observed of this most historic appropriation, 'The awakening of Virgil by Dante is an arc of flame which leaps from one great soul to another.'[34] The modern philologist might well have been speaking for the Renaissance itself.

Apollo, once the ultimate divine source of poetic inspiration, is reduced on this *Parnassus* to playing his *lira da braccio* as merely the leading of mortal poets. The ancient god looks heavenward, to a yet higher source for his own inspiration, to the one true God. In the vault immediately above him, the figure

[32] Vasari, *Le vite*, VII, p. 176, IV, pp. 339-40; Condivi, *La vita*, pp. 167-8.

[33] On these inspired seers, see E. Wind, 'Michelangelo's Prophets and Sibyls', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 51 (1960), pp. 47-84.

[34] E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. W.B. Trask (New York, 1953), p. 358.

of Poetry is flanked by putti bearing an inscription that might, in this context, seem slightly ironic: 'Numine afflatur' (Fig. 16.16). Adapted from the *Aeneid* (VI, 50-51), the words recall those of the Sibyl who, trembling, her heart swelling with wild frenzy, her voice no longer mortal, now feels the breath of the god: 'adflata est numine quando / iam propriore dei.'[35] 'Poetry springs from divine frenzy,' Marsilio Ficino had declared, 'frenzy from the Muses, and the Muses from Jove,' who is 'the soul of the whole universe, who inwardly nourishes heaven and earth.'[36] In Raphael's *Parnassus* Apollo is no longer the god who inspires but is rather himself the inspired one. Within the Christian context of the Stanza della Segnatura, the ancient god of poetry becomes the kind of good poet that Plato, in Ficino's reading, accepted into the city, the poet of 'divine hymns' who is inspired 'to speak honourably of God'.[37] The divine frenzy that shook Virgil's Sibyl informs those of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, especially the Delphica (Fig. 16.17), whose staring eyes are filled with awe of the inspiring God, not Apollo but the same universal deity that enflamed Moses.

Having mastered the physiognomics of inspiration, Raphael extended this knowledge to portraiture, paying tribute to the poet, humanist, and papal orator Tommaso 'Fedra' Inghirami (Fig. 16.18), who had been appointed Vatican librarian by Julius II. Inghirami, we recall, has often been identified as Raphael's immediate guide in programming the Stanza della Segnatura, and it has even been suggested that Raphael painted his portrait in gratitude for that guidance. Inghirami does seem to have been particularly sensitive to the art of painting; certainly he invoked it to enliven his oratory, exploiting the rhetorical potential of the *ut pictura poesis* topos. Depicting the writer at his desk, Raphael's image is more than merely 'the first independent Renaissance portrait that is not psychologically self- contained', as it was called by one student of the portrait in the Renaissance; nor is it sufficient to describe the

[35] On the inscriptions of the ceiling personifications and their literary sources, see Pfeiffer, *Zur Ikonographie von Raffaels Disputa*, pp. 153-70; on Poetry and the *Parnassus* in particular, see the several studies by E. Schröter: 'Raffaels *Parnass*: eine ikonographische Untersuchung', in *Actas del XXIII Congreso internacional de historia del arte* (Granada, 1973), III, pp. 593-605, 'Raffaels *Parnass*', *Kunstchronik* 30 (1977), pp. 75-7, and, for the preceding tradition, *Die Ikonographie des Themas Parnass vor Raffael. Die Schrift- und Biltraditionen von der Spätantik bis zum 15. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim and New York, 1977). See as well the suggestive essay by P.F. Watson, 'To Paint Poetry: Raphael on Parnassus', in M. Cline Horowitz et al. (eds), *Renaissance Rereadings. Intertext and context*, (Urbana and Chicago, 1988), pp. 113-41, who raises the relevant but problematic issue of the painter's self-portrayal among the poets.

[36] *De divino furore*, letter of 1457 to Peregrino Agli, in *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, tr. School of Economic Science, London (New York, 1985), I, p. 18.

[37] For Ficino's commentary and his attitude toward poetry, see M.J.B. Allen, *Synoptic Art. Marsilio Ficino on the history of Platonic interpretation* (Florence, 1998), esp. pp. 93-123; passage and translation cited on p. 97.

sitter as simply having 'been interrupted at his desk, ... his attention attracted by some unseen interlocutor.'[38] In Raphael's conception Inghirami the poet, holding his pen above the blank paper, looks to a higher source for inspiration, almost as though the painter, in a flash of inspiration of his own, had found the perfect way to accommodate the sitter's divergent strabismus.

Raphael's Inghirami shares with his frescoed Heraclitus - as well as with an older tradition of inspired Evangelists - that state of expectation; each awaits the mediation of his own *daemon* or spirit, that personal force linking the creative individual to a higher sphere. The messengers accompanying Michelangelo's prophets and sibyls play just such a mediating role; these genius figures signal the privileged status of the seer in communication with that higher source of inspiration: filled with the divine breath, Isaiah and the Delphica are, literally, called away. Like them, the Renaissance poet answered to his 'unelected vocation' (in the later words of Sir Philip Sidney); within the context of an essentially Platonising poetics, the poet could claim the role of *vates*, 'a diviner, foreseer, or prophet' (to continue with Sidney's defence).[39] As in the pronouncements of the ancient oracles, 'that same exquisite observing of number and measure in the words' affirmed the 'divine force' of poetry. But if such mensuration can be taken as confirming the divine origin of the art, that origin is more immediately manifest in the frenzy that seizes the poet at the moment of inspiration, an experience that is, by definition, beyond reason, that is, beyond measure.

Beyond measure: that notion returns us to the aesthetic implications of the *School of Athens*. Having declared the affiliation of the painter with geometry, Raphael, in his Heraclitan tribute to Michelangelo, acknowledged an important alternative model of the artist: not as objective measurer, master of mathematics, but rather as melancholic, inspired poet, subject to divine frenzy. To the artist on the Aristotelian side of his fresco, as the controlled maker of measured images, he juxtaposed a more subjective, essentially Platonic model: the artist as inspired creator. It is, then, on this highly professional level of the figuring of artistic *virtù* that we engage Raphael the pictorial thinker. If the addition of 'il Pensieroso' answered to a perceived formal need, the solution was conceived within the established semiotics of the painted field; it operates within the balanced dialectics of the composition as a whole. The Michelangelesque author is antithesis to the rational painter of the self-portrait.

The tension between geometry and melancholy speaks of a fundamental shift in aesthetic thought, and that tension lies at the very core of an image

[38] J. Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (New York, 1966), p. 117. Further on Inghirami and the papal court, see Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance* pp. 151-7.

[39] *The Defense of Poesy*, in *Sir Philip Sidney. Selected Prose and Poetry*, ed. R. Kimbrough (New York, 1969), pp. 103, 106.

produced only a few years after Raphael's fresco: Dürer's engraving of 1514, self-titled *Melencolia I* (Fig. 16.19). Within the ominous disorder of its setting, its nocturnal meteorology, its scattered tools and magical table, its objects of number, measure and weight, its implications of aspiration rising from ponderous gravity, the image presents a perverse version of inspired genius. Understandably, *Melencolia I* has come to exist in a hermeneutical jungle all its own, and yet all viewers agree that any interpretation must begin with the brooding aspect of the winged protagonist, this melancholic creature whose dark features, pose and ponderation embody the humour blazoned in the sky.

Erwin Panofsky, the most venerable and generally most persuasive of interpreters, has presented Dürer's engraving as a document of personal aesthetic confession, and that reading of the image is of obvious relevance to our topic.[40] Explanation of the numbered title is found via the Platonising *Occulta philosophia* of Henry Cornelius Agrippa and its articulation of three levels of melancholy, corresponding to *imaginatio*, *ratio* and *mens*. The first level, then, is the melancholy of an imaginative being, the melancholy claimed for the artist. From this Ficino-inspired German Neoplatonic base, Panofsky proceeds to define Dürer as the truly advanced artist of the High Renaissance: as 'opposed to the older Italian art-theorists such as Alberti or Leonardo,' Dürer, 'more than anyone, was convinced that the imaginative achievements of painters and architects were derived from higher and ultimately divine inspiration. While fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Italians had waged war for the recognition of pictorial art as a liberal art purely in the name of a 'ratio' which should enable the artist to master reality by means of his rational insight into natural laws, and thereby to raise his activity to the rank of an exact science, Dürer,' Panofsky argues, 'despite his passionate championship of this very "ratio", was aware of the fact that the deepest source of creative power was to be sought elsewhere, in that purely irrational and individual gift or inspiration which Italian belief granted, if at all, only to the 'literarum studiosi' and the 'Musarum sacerdotes'.'[41]

[40] Panofsky's reading is set forth in *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 4th ed. (Princeton, 1955), pp. 156-71, and, more circumstantially, in R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the history of natural philosophy, religion and art* (New York, 1964), pp. 284-373. His interpretation has hardly gone unchallenged, of course, but I still find the personal dimension consonant with the affect of the image, as does J.L. Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago and London, 1993), pp. 20-7. For an exhaustive review of previous interpretations and further contribution, see P.-K. Schuster, *Melencolia I. Dürers Denkbild* (Berlin, 1991). One recent attempt to undermine Panofsky's reading of *Melencolia I*, indicting it for being 'socially and politically motivated', is the ideological critique of K. Moxey, *The Practice of Theory. Poststructuralism, cultural politics, and art history* (Ithaca and London, 1994), pp. 65-78.

[41] Panofsky, *Saturn and Melancholy*, pp. 360-1. Regarding the notion of 'genius', see the cautionary comments of Martin Kemp, 'The "Super-artist" as Genius: the sixteenth-century

Dürer himself gave direct expression in word as well as image to the concept of the inspired artist. 'A good painter,' he famously declared, 'is full of figures [*inwendig voller vigur*], and were it possible for him to live forever he would always have from his inward "ideas", whereof Plato speaks, something new to pour forth in his work.'[42] And yet, like his Italian mentors, the German too sought the truth of nature and beauty in mathematics, only to have to admit the futility of the effort. Despite his ambitious anthropometry, he had to acknowledge that 'None but God can judge of beauty.' 'As for geometry,' he wrote, 'it may prove the truth of some things; but with respect to others we must resign ourselves to the opinion and judgement of men.' 'I know not,' he confesses, 'how to show any particular measure that approximates to the greatest beauty.'[43]

It was misleading of Panofsky to insist on the advanced distance of Dürer from his Italian contemporaries, for they too were questioning the commensurability of beauty. Leonardo himself - famously committed to the certainty of mathematics as a tenet of faith, to proportion in all things, in lifelong pursuit of a formula for squaring the circle, seeking something like a unified field theory relating microcosm and macrocosm - Leonardo himself could only end by applying his rationally derived forms to the furious imagination of his late Deluge drawings. 'Why,' he wondered, 'does the eye see a thing more clearly in dreams than with the imagination being awake?'[44] Similar thoughts occurred to Dürer: 'Ah! how often in my sleep do I behold great works of art and beautiful things, the like whereof never appear to me awake, but so soon as I awake even the remembrance of them leaves me.'[45] On at least one famous occasion, however, in 1525, he did indeed remember such a dream vision, of a frightening deluge ('how many great waters fell from heaven'), the recall of which left him 'trembling all over', but not too afraid to pick up his water-colour brush the next morning and record his nightmare.[46]

view', in P. Murray (ed.), *Genius. The history of an idea* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 32-53.

[42] H. Rupprich, ed., *Dürer. Schriftlicher Nachlass* (Berlin, 1959-69), II, p. 113. Tr. W.M. Conway, *The Literary Remains of Albrecht Dürer* (Cambridge, 1889), p. 177.

[43] Rupprich, *Dürer. Schriftlicher Nachlass*, II, pp. 101, 120, III, pp. 287, 284, 293. Cited by Panofsky in *Saturn and Melancholy*, pp. 364-5.

[44] J.P. Richter (ed.), *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, 3rd edn (London, 1970), no. 1144. Leonardo's continuing efforts to square the circle eventuated in what he himself called 'geometrical games', and his deepening experience with the natural forces of the world led to increasingly powerful visions: 'extraordinarily intellectual means towards what we may irresistibly feel to be furiously expressive ends', in the words of Martin Kemp (*Leonardo da Vinci. The marvellous works of nature and man* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), p. 320).

[45] Rupprich, *Dürer. Schriftlicher Nachlass*, II, p. 114; Conway, *The Literary Remains*, p. 180.

[46] Rupprich, *Dürer. Schriftlicher Nachlass*, I, pp. 214-15; Conway, *The Literary Remains*, p. 145. For the water-colour, see F. Anzelewsky, *Dürer. His art and life* (Fribourg, 1980), p. 243, pl. 239.

For all Alberti's good efforts on behalf of the art of painting, offering its mathematical basis in defence of its liberal status, and despite Leonardo's warning that no one read him 'who is not a mathematician', by the early Cinquecento the application of such objective measure to art was no longer axiomatic. New standards of judgement were increasingly subjective. A new licence was accorded the artist to go beyond the rules of art. This is Vasari's summary, toward mid-century, of values developed at the beginning of the *terza maniera*, 'che noi vogliamo chiamare moderna', our High Renaissance. What distinguished the masters of this modern manner was 'a licence that, while not being of the rule, was nonetheless ordered by rule,' 'a true judgment which, without measuring figures, gives them, in appropriate relation to their size, a grace that exceeds measure.'[47] As Michelangelo declared, 'one should have the compasses in one's eyes, not in one's hands, because the hands execute but it is the eye that judges.'[48] A grace beyond measure could hardly be subject to such mechanical calibration.

Grace, of course, was the term applied above all to Raphael, 'il graziosissimo Raffaello', the artist who, as Vasari emphasised, was born and died on Good Friday. The term itself enjoys a complex semantic history, ranging from the aesthetic sphere to the social and religious and back again, recharged, to the aesthetic, and that valent complexity accompanies its usage in the early Cinquecento. When Castiglione in the *Cortegiano* appropriates the word for comportment he builds upon that inherited resonance: 'the Courtier must accompany his actions, his gestures, his habits, in short, his every movement, with grace.' Castiglione's *portavoce* in the dialogue, Cesare Gonzaga, goes on to explain, 'by the very meaning of the word, it can be said that he who has grace finds grace,' which circularity leads to the observation that 'it is almost proverbial that grace is not learned' but is rather 'a gift of nature and the heavens.'[49] Endowed by heaven with grace, Raphael shared the gift with the world through his own social being as well as through his art.[50]

That art, the classical art of the *terza maniera*, displayed a 'charming and graceful facility' that was suggested rather than stated, 'fra 'l vedi e non vedi', as Vasari puts it, between the seen and the unseen. Rhetorically, this is the legacy of ancient Timanthes, whose work always suggested more than was

[47] Vasari, *Le vite*, IV, p. 9. An important, highly suggestive and corrective discussion of the subjective in sixteenth-century visual aesthetics is offered by Elizabeth Cropper, 'The place of beauty in the High Renaissance and its displacement in the history of art' in A. Vos (ed.), *Place and Displacement in the Renaissance* (Binghamton, N.Y., 1994), pp. 159-205.

[48] Vasari, *Le vite*, VII, p. 270.

[49] B. Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, tr. C.S. Singleton (Garden City, N.Y., 1959), pp. 40-2.

[50] Further on the grace of Raphael, see Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, pp. 372-9, and, for the literary creation of that image of the artist, see J. Shearman, 'Castiglione's portrait of Raphael', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 38 (1994), pp. 69-97.

actually depicted.[51] To make *quello che non e sia* had been the traditional challenge to the painter, already articulated by Cennino Cennini. But toward 1500 the principle is extended from the mimetic power of painting to the quality of style itself, becoming central to the subjective art of the High Renaissance: the art of Leonardo, in which contour is lost in surrounding *sfumato*, inviting the searching engagement of the viewing eye; the art of Giorgione, in which shadowed poetry invites the participating projection of the active viewer; the art of Raphael, the natural grace of whose figural invention does indeed exceed measure. Raphael's creation of beauty derived less from the combinatorial logic of Zeuxian eclecticism, gathering the best from nature's variety, than from an idea in the mind, as he supposedly explained in regard to his *Galatea*: 'io mi servo di certa Iddea che mi viene nella mente.'[52]

On a formal level, the issues of perception and projection come to focus on the problem of the contour. Leonardo in particular, increasingly aware of its problematic nature, worries the difference between a drawn line and the disappearing edge of an object in nature. In painting his resolution involved just that *sfumato* effect, which gave his figures not only the *rilievo* requisite to the modern manner but also 'movement and breath' and a 'divine grace'.[53] But it was in drawing especially that the closed contour came to be most aggressively challenged as Leonardo discovered the 'spirito di prontezza', the liveliness of execution that later cinquecento critics were to claim as a necessary ingredient of style. Attentive to the motions of his own hand as a draftsman, Leonardo discovered and named the sketch, that is, the open exploratory mode of drawing that represented in the most immediate way the idea formed in the mind: that is, giving graphic expression to those figures of which the painter's head is so full (to revert to Dürer's awkward but appealing image).[54]

As Leonardo himself insisted, his discoveries always came from experience, in this case from observing himself in action, although his experience as a draftsman was hardly unique. The discovery of the sketch, then, could readily become the basis for a full pictorial aesthetics, a Platonising aesthetics of inspiration. Sketches, Vasari was to write, rapidly executed and nearly formless ('in forma di una macchia') - what Leonardo had called 'componimento

[51] Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXV.74.

[52] Golzio, *Raffaello nei documenti*, pp. 30-1; E. Camesasca, *Raffaello. Gli scritti* (Milan, 1994), p. 166. Addressed to Castiglione and published in several sixteenth-century collections, the letter has recently been ascribed to Castiglione himself, another of his literary fictions: see Shearman, 'Castiglione's portrait of Raphael'. For further discussion, see also Schwartz, 'Raphael's authorship', pp. 488-90.

[53] Vasari, *Le vite*, IV, p. 11.

[54] Some of these themes have been explored in my lecture 'On drawing a line', in *The Meaning of the Mark. Leonardo and Titian* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1988), pp. 11-48, and are further developed in my forthcoming *Drawing Acts. Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation* (Cambridge University Press).

inculto' - such sketches are done in a state of creative frenzy: 'dal furor dello artefice.'[55] As the agency by which ideas ('i primi pensieri') first find form, drawing provided the empirical basis for, or confirmation of, a conception of pictorial inspiration. The impulsive lines of the sketch recorded the creative fury of the inspired artist, testifying to a creative energy barely under control; the very immediacy of the sketch, its casual disregard of pictorial niceties, confirmed its credentials. Bold and burning ('tutto fiero ed acceso'), it was the graphic document of that heated moment of inspiration, the artist's *afflatus*.

In elevating graphic production to the level of Platonic inspiration, Vasari was only confirming a basic shift in values that occurred between the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento. The notion of creative fury, transferred to the pictorial arts, endowed them with the highest privilege, permitting a new concept of artistic genius to enter the critical vocabulary - with the celebration of Michelangelo as 'divine': 'Michel, più che mortale, Angel divino,' as Ariosto sang in the *Orlando furioso*. According divinity to the artist carries a step further the granting of grace; however Platonising, the new vocabulary necessarily carried a special resonance within a Christian culture.

No longer the learned mathematician of the earlier Renaissance, Alberti's ideal, the new High Renaissance artist represents a more subjective and irrational set of values; his art depends less upon commensurability and control than upon the irrationality of inspiration, the intervention of a power beyond the reach of human reason. Nowhere is this distinction more eloquently figured than in Raphael's *School of Athens*. His Heraclitus/Michelangelo appears as a precocious declaration, a prolepsis to a new cinquecento aesthetics. Before it finds full literary articulation, the new conception of the artist is given pictorial form in a painter's tribute to his particularly creative collegial competitor. It is the pictorial intelligence of Raphael that first publicly announces the new aesthetic, that figures forth a new conception of the artist. It seems only right that this new conception should be applied posthumously to Raphael himself, by his own personal engraver (Fig. 16.20): in Marcantonio Raimondi's image of the artist self-enclosed, immobilised - a blank panel behind him awaiting the inspired brush.[56]

[55] Vasari, *Le vite*, I, p. 174.

[56] Bartsch, XIV, p. 369, no. 496, as a portrait of Raphael; Delabord, no. 233, as more likely Marcantonio himself. For further references on this engraving, see G. Bernini Pezzini, S. Massari, and S. Posperi Valenti Rodinò, *Raphael inventi. Stampe da Raffaello nelle collezioni dell'Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica* (Rome, 1985), p. 226.