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AGERE CORPORALITER

OTTO VAN VEEN'S THEORY OF IMAGINATION

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In a request addressed in 1619 to the archdukes Albrecht and Isabella, the court painter and emblematist Otto Van Veen, alias Vaenius[1], said that he would devote the rest of the year to the creation of engravings 'and other speculative works, among which the True Precepts of the Art of Painting and Sculpture with notes and images'.[2] Unfortunately, this treatise has never been found or, more probably, was never written. Nevertheless, it is tempting to identify one of these 'obras speculativas' by this *pictor doctus* as being his *Physicae et theologicae conclusiones* of 1621.[3] This slim and visually intriguing treatise on predestination and free will, rarely studied until now,[4] may be one of the major keys to understanding the coherence of Van Veen's very rich and multifaceted visual production, as it is underpinned by an original conception of imagination. In the present article, after an overall presentation of the treatise and a detailed reading of the chapter devoted to imagination (integrating relevant elements from other chapters as well), we will try to bring to light the original and even unorthodox aspects of this theory, by contrasting it with the writings of three contemporaries whom Vaenius may have known (Van Helmont, Fienus and Zuccari). Next, we will attempt to reconstruct Vaenius' conception of the artist, which we will compare to his famous representation of the *pictor* in the *Horatiana Emblemata.* In conclusion, we will return to the *Conclusiones* and show the extent to which the topics of image and imagination are key to understanding the whole book and its theological content.

The Conclusiones*: a general survey*

[1] The most complete recent biography is that of Porteman K., "Veen, Otto (Octavio) van", in *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek* vol. 20 (2011) 1060-1087.

[2] '(…) desearia emplear el resto de sus años en sacar a luz estampas y algunos obras speculativas, como entre otras los Verdaderos Preceptos del Arte de Pintura y Esculptura con notas e ymagines (…).' Quoted by de Maeyer M., *Albrecht en Isabella en de schilderkunst* (Brussels: 1955), 347-348.

[3] Vaenius O., *Physicae et theologicae conclusiones, notis et figuris dispositae ac demonstratae, de primariis fidei capitibus, atque inprimis de praedestinatione, quomodo effectus illius superetur a libero arbitrio* (Orsellis [sic]: 1621).

[4] Geissmar C., "The Geometrical Order of the World: Otto Van Veen's *Physicae et theologicae conclusiones*", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993) 168-182; Melion W.S., *The Meditative Art. Studies in the Northern Devotional Print, 1550-1625* (Philadelphia: 2009) 340-341; Dekoninck R. – Guiderdoni A., "Reasoning Pictures: Vaenius's *Physicae et Theologicae Conclusiones* (1621)", in McKeown S. (ed), *Otto Vaenius and his Emblem Books* (Glasgow: 2012) 175-196; Catellani A., "Emblematic and Graphic Processes in Vaenius's *Physicae et Theologicae Conclusiones* (1621): Semiotic Observations", in McKeown, *Otto Vaenius and his Emblem Books*, 197-210; Van Veen O., *Theologicae et Physicae Conclusiones*, 1621, trans. Smeesters A., introduction by Catellani A. – Dekoninck R. – Granjon E. – Guiderdoni A. – Smeesters A. (Turnhout: in press). Dekoninck R. – Guiderdoni A., "La théologie par figures géométriques dans les *Conclusiones Theologicae et Physicae* d'Otto Van Veen (1621)", in Gay J.-P. – Stiker-Métral Ch.-O. (ed.), *Les Métamorphoses de la théologie. Théologie, littérature et discours religieux au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: 2012) 262-274. Dekoninck R., "Peace through the image from Van Barrefelt to Van Veen", in Leuschner E. (ed.), *Die Rekonstruktion der Gesellschaft aus der Kunst: Antwerper Malerei und Graphik in und nach den Katastrophen des späten 16. Jahrhunderts* (Petersberg: 2016) 37-42. Dekoninck R., "Visual Representation as Real Presence. Otto van Veen's *Naples Vision of Saint Thomas Aquinas*", in Van Eck C. – Van Gastel J. – Van Kessel E. (ed.), *The Secret Lives of Art Works. Exploring the Boundaries between Art and Life* (Leiden: 2014) 179-199.

The *Physicae and theologicae conclusiones* present themselves as a booklet whose text is divided into 20 chapters, each occupying only two facing pages: on the right page, an engraving represents a geometrical and diagrammatic *figure* with letters, while the left page gives the 'caption' of the image, a description and explanation of the letters and figures, followed by a few authoritative quotations. The main theme is a defence of the theory of free will against predestination, but the book includes developments on various other topics as well (notably, images and imagination). As it appears from the beginning of the book (title-page and preface), the two main authorities referred to are Seneca and Paracelsus, respectively standing for the neo-stoic and the alchemical theories of the time.

The first five chapters[5] are devoted to the Creation, from the eternal existence of 'the Being and the One' to the creation of the Universe, and the creation of Man, who is composed of three parts: body, spirit and soul. At the intersection of these three components stands the Divine Nature of Man. A Trinitarian triangle designates this Deity in Man, which makes him a free agent in his dealings with God and other men. The following four chapters[6] demonstrate the power of Evil in the Creation. This part of the book is framed by the fall of Lucifer and the fall of Adam, in between which Vaenius sets out the agency of the Deity in Man, which tends either towards God or towards terrestrial things; and the omnipresence of God in his creation, who doesn't affect the essentially free Divine Nature of Man. The tenth chapter on 'the coming of Christ through the Virgin Mary' makes the transition towards the Redemption that God has granted to Mankind through the Incarnation.

After these first ten chapters which range over the history of the world from Creation to Redemption and provide a general cosmological and anthropological framework, Vaenius devotes six chapters to individual human life, from conception (which yields the question of predestination)[7] to death and ultimate resurrection on Judgment Day.[8] The agency of man in the world and during this life is addressed through two topics: 'good works' (articulated with divine grace and human merit),[9] and, quite surprisingly, the power of imagination (chapter 14: 'Man's Imagination is a real Being', to which we will return). The last four chapters are more precisely devoted to the Church and to cult matters: the Eucharist;[10] the role of sacraments in salvation (Vaenius considers them as not absolutely necessary);[11] the defining characteristics of Catholic Church;[12] and the efficient and necessary visibility of Christianity.[13]

There is thus a clear progress from chapter 1 to chapter 20 as they explore the reciprocal agency of free will and divine predestination. This was a highly controversial and vexed topic in the early 17th century, dividing not only Catholics and Protestants, but also Catholics among themselves, and especially the Dominicans, Jesuits and Jansenists. The *Conclusiones* themselves were felt to be problematic enough by the theological authorities to earn them a condemnation (in 1630, after the death of their author), as we will show below.

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[5] Chapter 1: 'On the Being and the One'; chapter 2: 'On the Being and the Nothingness'; chapter 3: 'On the Form of the Separation between the Being and the Nothingness'; chapter 4: 'On the creation of the Universe'; chapter 5: 'On the creation of Man'.
[6] Chapter 6: 'The fall of Lucifer'; chapter 7: 'The agency of the Deity in Man'; chapter 8: 'How God is present everywhere and in all actions'; chapter 9: 'The fall of Adam'.
[7] Chapter 11: 'On predestination'; chapter 12: 'Where Evil and Sin come from – again on predestination'.
[8] Chapter 15: 'On the death of Man and the Purgatory'; Chapter 16: 'On the Last Judgment and the Resurrection of creatures'.
[9] Chapter 13: 'On the works and the grace of God and the merits'.
[10] Chapter 17: 'On the Virtue and presence of God in the Eucharist'.
[11] Chapter 18: 'How the Pagans may be saved'.
[12] Chapter 19: 'On the Church'.
[13] Chapter 20: 'How Corporeal Things and External Ceremonies Are Efficacious at Moving the Deity in Man'.

The more striking aspect of the treatise is constitued by its strange diagrams. The reason for choosing this kind of very original geometrical diagram is probably that it permits the representation of movement in a fixed image, both the movement inside each engraving (suggested by dotted lines or rays)[14] and the movement running throughout the whole series of engravings. This corresponds to the dynamic process of attraction and repulsion which is at the core of Vaenius' treatise: the salvation of man depends on his free movement towards God, in a process of configuration to the image and likeness of God; conversely, damnation ensues from a movement in the other direction. This is indeed the main issue of Vaenius' treatise: the interactions that are constantly in motion, which we will see now in details through the analysis of the chapter 14 devoted to imagination.

Vaenius' theory of imagination: chapter 14

> Caput XIV: Quod imaginatio hominis sit ens reale.
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> Imaginatio hominis, tum Animae, tum spiritus, ens est reale, constans (aeque ac omnia corpora creata) corpore, spiritu et anima, quamvis subtilioribus quam caetera sensitiva corpora; et sicut Deus sua imaginatione aut verbo NNN[15] (quod ens reale summi Dei est) creavit universum B, sic homo imaginatione sua O creat entia realia P, quae corporaliter agunt in rebus et corporibus, sicut in muliere praegnante certa ratione naturali fortius apparet quam in aliis; nam spiritus aut anima sola nihil agit sine corpore, nec corpus sine spiritu ac anima, cum ab invicem separari nequeant et in aeternum cohaereant. Imaginatio enim aut cogitatio spiritus rationalis naturalis (quae daemoni ac homini potest innotescere), si fide aut confidentia comitetur, incredibili est (quando in actum exsurgit) quam late se extendat: hominis vero Deitatis affectus, cum fide aut confidentia supernaturaliter per imaginationem exsurgens, nulla ratione naturali comprehendi potest, solique Deo illa cognitio relinquenda.
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> *Ipse dixit, et facta sunt* (Psal. 32)
>
> *Nihil incorporeum agit in corporeum* (Arist.)[16]

> Chapter 14: Man's Imagination is a real Being.
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> Man's imagination, whether of his soul or spirit, is a real being, consisting (as every created body) of a body, a spirit and a soul, more subtle however than in the case of the other sensitive bodies; and just as God, through his imagination or word NNN (which is a real being of the most high God) has created the universe B, so man, through his imagination O, creates real beings P, which act corporally on things and bodies, as it appears more forcefully, for a certain natural reason, in the pregnant woman than in other beings; indeed, the spirit or the soul alone does nothing without the body, nor the body without the spirit and the soul, as they cannot be separated one from another, and are bound together for ever. Therefore, if the imagination or cogitation of the natural, rational spirit (which can be known by the devil and by man) is accompanied by faith or confidence, the magnitude of its extension, when it expresses itself in action, is incredible; but the feeling of man's Divine Nature, accompanied by faith or confidence,

[14] The convention of using dotted lines or rays to represent the invisible was also adopted at the same time in Flemish engravings showing God like a kind of radiation, a visual trick to solve the problem of the unfigurability of the divine.
[15] This refers to the captions in the engraving, as the other isolated letters.
[16] Page 30.

> and expressing itself in a supernatural way through imagination, cannot be understood by any natural reason : this knowledge must be left to God alone.[17]
>
> *He spoke, and things came to be* (Psalms, 32)[18]
>
> *Nothing incorporeal acts on the corporeal* (Aristotle)[19]

Vaenius starts chapter 14 by stating that imagination is a *real being,* and as such, is made of a body, spirit and soul – as is everything created in this world. Vaenius' view mainly ensues from his basic Paracelsian assumption (cf. letter to the reader) that everything in the world is made of three parts: a body, a spirit and a soul (corresponding to the three elements salt, sulphur and mercury).[20] Man is tripartite, and imagination is then conceived as stemming from either his soul or his spirit.[21] Imagination itself is tripartite, made of a (more subtle kind of) body, spirit and soul. And last but not least, the products of imagination are also *entia realia,* thus made of a body, a spirit and a soul.

The ability of imagination to create real beings is explicitly compared to God's own power of creation: a parallel is drawn between the production of the universe (B) through God's word (N) and the production of real beings (P) through man's imagination (O) (O/P = N/B). According to this audacious comparison, visually translated on the opposite page [Fig. 1], the human imagination achieves the status of the *Verbum Dei*, identified with a kind of divine imagination (*sicut Deus sua imaginatione aut verbo…*). The imagination, both human and divine, has the power to incarnate quite literally ideas, that is to give them a corporeal existence, which is confirmed by the quotation below taken from the Psalms (*ipse dixit et facta sunt*).

The text further states that the products of imagination have the power to act corporally (*agere corporaliter*) on other bodies. The only concrete example Vaenius gives (and which he presents as the most evident case) is that of pregnant women. Vaenius here refers to the traditional idea according to which the mother's imagination may have a corporeal effect on her foetus – a belief already attested in classical authors.[22] The corporeal agency of the products of imagination is taken by Vaenius as evidence for their own corporeal nature, as

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[17] The translation is ours, with the support of Geissmar's summary ("The Geometrical Order of the World" 172-173).

[18] Psalms 33, 9.

[19] Reference non identified.

[20] Page 3: *Deinde e Physicis et Chimicis ostendo (sicut primum ab Isaco Hollandoexcellenti medico olim declaratum est, et postea Paracelso adscriptum) universum hoc omniaque entia particularia e sale, sulphure et mercurio constare, quae soluta, aut dispositione mutata, sunt oleum, sal, liquor, tum corpus, spiritus et anima, deinde (cum supra captum nostrum exaltata aut sublimata sint) substantia, vita et intelligentia ; itaque omnia e trino et uno naturali demonstratione constare affirmant.* 'Next, I show by physics and chemistry that (as has been first declared by the excellent physician Isaac Hollandus, and then ascribed to Paracelsus) this universe and every particular being are made of salt, sulphur and mercury, which elements, once dissolved or differently disposed, are oil, salt and water, then body, spirit and soul, next (when they have been exalted and sublimated beyond our reach) substance, life and intelligence; and so they proclaim, by a natural demonstration, that everything consists of three and one.'

[21] This may be compared with the traditional scholastic view, which distinguishes two parts in animated beings (body and soul) and considers imagination as an internal sense of the sensitive level of the soul.

[22] Battisti D., "Imitazione e gestazione umana (A proposito di Dion. Hal. De imit. VI p. 203, 1-6 Us. Rad.)", *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* N.S. 35/2 (1990) 65-68. See for instance Aetius, 5, 12, 2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De imitatione,* 6; Heliodorus, *Aethiopica,* 4, 8 and 10, 13-14; Galen, *Ad Pisonem de Theriaca,* 11; Soranus, *Gyn.,* 1, 12; Pliny, *Natural History,* 7, 52. The idea is still present in Ambroise Paré (*Œuvres complètes,* ed. Malfaigne, II (Paris:1841) 637-638).

appears from his recourse to a quotation attributed to Aristotle: 'nothing incorporeal acts on the corporeal'. The origin of this quotation has not yet been identified; it may come from a manual or a summary of Aristotelian principles. Very short and clear-cut, the phrase was probably qualified by its context and may have been used to signify that spiritual entities do not compromise themselves with matter and only act *indirectly* on it.[23] The phrase functions here as the major premise of an implied syllogism: "nothing incorporeal acts on the corporeal; yet we know by experience (in the case of pregnant women) that the products of imagination may act on corporeal beings (like a foetus); so the products of imagination are not incorporeal". In this way, Vaenius confirms his basic Paracelsian postulate (everything is tripartite) and also strengthens the similarity/resemblance of man to God (since both create real beings by their imagination alone), and hence man's fundamental dignity and freedom.

The last section of the chapter seems to distinguish between two modalities of imagination, the one natural and the other supernatural. The first one stems from the rational spirit, and may possibly be known (and used?) by the devil; however natural, it may have incredible effectiveness if it is accompanied by faith and confidence. Vaenius does not clarify the kind of effectiveness he is thinking about; but a connection could be made with chapter 15, where he mentions the ability of magicians to separate their mind from their body and to duplicate the latter, indicating that they do so *naturali modo, sive per virtutem imaginationis, sive adjumento daemonis, aut secus* ('on a natural way, either through the virtue of imagination, or with the help of the devil, or otherwise'). The second, supernatural modality of imagination corresponds with the expression of man's Divine Nature; this modality too must be accompanied by faith or confidence to be efficient; but its extension is knowable by God alone. As man, according to Vaenius, is the only creature to have the free disposition of his divine Nature (cf. chapter 5), man is also the only one to have access to this modality of imagination – we must bear in mind that 'natural imagination', as one of the faculties of the sensitive soul, was traditionally supposed to be shared also by animals.

In the diagram, the position of the letter O, standing for imagination, clearly indicates the relational status of this faculty, whose products are projected outside of man. But if they get out of their 'creator', the products of imagination nevertheless remain bound to him forever. In chapter 16, we read that on the day of last judgment, when the bodies, souls and spirits of men will be united again, every man will be accompanied by his 'actions, thoughts and products of imagination as an army of little real beings attached to him, and whose weight, if they are impure, may pull him down to the abyss.[24] These actions, thoughts and products of imagination are represented on the diagram of chapter 16 by little groups of three circles, as they are *entia realia* composed by a body, spirit and soul. Man is therefore responsible, in Vaenius'view, not only for what he does, but also for what he thinks and for what he imagines.

All in all, imagination thus appears in the *Conclusions* as a very noble faculty, through which man (as the true image of God) acts with dignity, liberty and responsibility; and the products of imagination receive a certain density and a remarkable agency.

The similar position of Van Helmont

[23] We have to thank here our colleague Stéphane Mercier for his philosophical advice on this matter.

[24] Page 34: *Hinc colligas fore ut homo in ultimo die, junctis suis tribus partibus* (…) *simul cum suis actionibus, cogitationibus et imaginationibus (quae entia sunt realia ipsique annexa, et quae palam eum comitantur) fulgeat* (…). *E contra qui actionum et cogitationum suarum, entium realium, impuritate obruti sunt, istarum pondere onerati, ad inferos et abyssum descendent.*

The chemist Jan Baptist Van Helmont (1580-1644), with whom Vaenius was probably in contact in Brussels at the Archduke's court,[25] developed the same kind of views about imagination. The convergence is particularly striking in this extract from Van Helmont's *Ortus medicinae*,[26] in chapter 16 of the treatise *De injectis materialibus* (a chapter entitled: 'Man, as an image of God, creates some beings which are something more than non-beings'[27]):

> *Etenim solus Deus est creator summe gloriosus in infinitum laudabilis, qui universum creavit ex nihilo. Homo autem, quatenus est simulacrum Dei, creat ex nihilo quaedam entia rationis, sive nonentia in sui initio, idque in propria virtutis phantasticae dote.* (...) *Nam inprimis dum ejusmodi conceptae Ideae tandem se corpore vestiunt, specie Imaginis fabricatae per imaginationem, fiunt entia jam subsistentia in medio illius vestimenti, cui per totum aequabiliter insunt. Et hactenus fiunt entia seminalia atque operativa, a quibus videlicet ipsa suorum assumpta subjecta totaliter mox diriguntur. Haec autem potestas data est soli homini* (601-602).
>
> Only God, indeed, is the supremely glorious creator, worthy of infinite praise, he who created the universe *ex nihilo.* But man, inasmuch as he is the image of God, creates *ex nihilo* some beings of reason, or rather non-beings in their beginnings, and he does so by virtue of the proper ability of his imaginative power. (...) Indeed, when these kinds of conceived ideas finally dress themselves with a body, in the guise of an image built by imagination, they already become substantial beings within this clothing, which they entirely and uniformly fill. And to that extent they become seminal and operative beings, that is, beings by which their very assumed subjects come to be totally directed. This power has been given to man alone.

This same conception of the power of imagination underpins a treatise by Van Helmont on the magnetic healing of wounds (*De magnetica vulnerum curatione*) published the same year as Vaenius' *Conclusiones* (1621). Now, the *De magnetica* and the *Conclusiones* were examined and condemned together by professors of the Leuven Faculty of Theology around 1627-1630, as we know from a number of documents mentioning both books.[28] While Vaenius was already dead (1629) when the condemnation was written (1630), the documents attest that both men were interrogated by the official of Malines about the presumably heretical positions of their respective writings.[29] Apart from the mentioned documents, the file of Vaenius' case has unfortunately been lost; but the one concerning Van Helmont is still available,[30] and may inform us about the problematic points in Vaenius' book as well. The

[25] Both men lived in Brussels (Vaenius since 1615, Van Helmont since 1616) and worked as the Archduke's court (Vaenius as 'garde de la monnaie', Van Helmont as a physician).

[26] Van Helmont J.B., *Ortus medicinae, id est, initia physicae inaudita. Progressus medicinae novus, in morborum ultionem, ad vitam longam* (Amsterdam: L. Elzevier, 1648).

[27] *Homo quatenus Imago Dei, creat quaedam entia, quae aliquid sunt amplius quam nonentia*.

[28] The documents are: reports of the meetings of the Leuven faculty of theology, dated 12 and 19 September 1627 (Leuven, Rijksarchief, Inventaire n° 682, doc. 387 , fol. 268); a censure written by seven professors of the faculty in 1630 (Mechelen, archiepiscopal archives, ms *Causa J.B. Helmontii,* 2^{d} volume in-folio, piece 3, at the end, edition: Broeckx C., "Notice sur le manuscrit *Causa J.B. Helmontii* déposé aux Archives Archiépiscopales de Malines", *Annales de l'Académie d'Archéologie de Belgique* 9 (1852) 303); and an undated proposition of sanction by professor Joannes Schenckelius (Mechelen, archiepiscopal archives, ms *Causa J.B. Helmontii,* 2^{d} volume in-folio, piece 4, at the end, edition: Broeckx, "Notice" 307). Actually the title of Vaenius' concerned book is not explicitly given, but its identification with the *Conclusiones* seems obvious. P. Nève de Mévergnies (*J.-B. Van Helmont, philosophe par le feu* (Paris: 1935) 134), who didn't know the *Conclusiones,* thought the condemnation was about the *Théâtre moral de la Vie humaine.*

[29] Cf. the report of 12th September 1627: (…) *proposui duos libellos cum articulis et responsionibus coram Reverendo domino Officiale factis per Ottoneum Vaenium et Joannem Baptistam Helmont* (…).

[30] Mechelen, archiepiscopal archives, ms *Causa J.B. Helmontii*; Broeckx, "Notice" 277-367; Broeckx C., "Interrogatoires du docteur J.B. Van Helmont sur le magnétisme animal", *Annales de l'Académie d'Archéologie de Belgique* 13 (1856) 306-350; Halleux R., "Le procès d'inquisition du chimiste Jean-Baptiste Van Helmont

main elements of the Van Helmont case which we will use here are: a booklet with a list of 24 'propositions' taken from Van Helmont's treatise, as well as 3 propositions summarizing the book and ascribed to Paracelsus, accompanied by commentaries of the Jesuit Jean Roberti and by censures from various European theologians (two editions, 1624 and 1634);[31] the reports of the questioning of Van Helmont by the official of Malines in 1627[32] on the 27 propositions; and a censure written by the Leuven professors in 1630 on the same propositions.[33] Three of the propositions (n°6, 12 and 13) are of particular interest for our consideration.

In proposition 6, Van Helmont claims that man too, as an image of God, has the power to act by his will alone.[34] In proposition 12, Van Helmont speaks about a 'magical power' which is present in man, but that has been as it were asleep since the commitment of original sin; it can be awakened by the Holy Spirit as well as by Satan.[35] Asked for more information during the trial, Van Helmont answered that this magical power consists of three elements: a burning will, a fervent imagination, and confidence; he also added that he got this theory from Paracelsus, and that the power he was talking about was to be considered as natural.[36] Proposition 13 is as follows: 'The soul of every animal has the power to create a real being and, by its will, to send it quite far away'.[37] During the 1627 questioning, Van Helmont explained that 'by "the power of creating real beings", he referred to all the cases in which, by a powerful imagination and by the will, the ideas of the conceived image were expressed, as in the case of pregnant women who by their will conform their foetus to the image they have in mind'.[38] It is interesting to note that Van Helmont gives the same example as Vaenius, which seems to indicate that it was an uncontroversial one.

The censures by the theologians reveal at least two problematic points in this kind of theory. The first one is the assimilation of man to God: in traditional theology, only God is capable of creating *ex nihilo,* of incarnating his ideas by his will alone. The booklet of 1624 adds to proposition 6: 'Doesn't this raise the conclusion that man is able to create the sky and earth *ex nihilo,* to awaken the dead and to do the other things that Catholic faith ascribes to God alone?'[39] And in 1630, the Leuven censors make the following comment: 'this proposition is wrong and very close to heresy, as it denies that only God can act by his will

(1578-1644): les enjeux et les arguments", *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 148/2 (2004) 1059-1086.

[31] *Joannis Baptistae Helmontii (...) propositiones notatu dignae* (Cologne: Birkmann, 1624 and Liège: J. Tournay, 1634). A transcription of both editions is given by Broeckx, "Notice" 313-327. See also the description by Halleux, "Le procès d'inquisition" 1065, note 35.

[32] Ms *Causa J.B. Helmontii,* 2d volume in-folio, piece 15. Edition Broecx, "Interrogatoires" 313-321.

[33] Ms *Causa J.B. Helmontii,* 2d volume in-folio, piece 3. Edition Broeckx, "Notice" 295-303. It is the same censure at the end of which Vaenius is mentioned.

[34] Proposition 6: *Si Deus agat per nutum, per verbum, sic oportuit hominem, si verum debeat dici eius simulacrum, agere nonnulla solo nutu. Neque enim id soli Deo vernaculum* (Broeckx, "Notice" 315).

[35] Proposition 12: *Potestas magica in nobis a peccato velut dormit : ideoque excitatore opus habet, sive is sit Spiritus Sanctus per illuminationem* (…)*, sive etiam Satanas* (Broeckx, "Notice" 316).

[36] 1627 questioning on proposition 12: *Interrogatus quid intelligat per potestatem magicam. Respondit se intellexisse voluntatem accensam, imaginationem ferventem, et confidentiam, et illa tria juncta efficiunt quidem potestatem et facultatem, quam respondens vocat magicam.* (…) *praedicta dicit se habere ex Paracelso. Potestatem vero illam magicam dicit esse naturalem* (Broecx, "Interrogatoires" 318).

[37] Proposition 13: *Cujuscumque bruti anima vim habet creandi entitatem realem, et per voluntatem dimittendi eam longius* (…) (Broeckx, "Notice" 316).

[38] *Dicit vero vim creandi entitatem realem se intelligere quoties forti imaginatione et voluntate fiunt ideae expressae istius imaginis conceptae, ut verbi gratia fit in praegnantibus, quae solo nutu traducant imaginem rei conceptae in foetum* (Broecx, "Interrogatoires" 318).

[39] *Hinc nonne aeque concludatur, hominem posse creare ex nihilo caelos et terras, excitare mortuos, et alia quae fides Catholica docet solius Dei esse ?* (Broeckx, "Notice" 315).

alone, against this phrase of the Psalmist in Psalm 32: *He spoke, and things came to be*'.[40] We recognize of course the same biblical quotation used by Vaenius, who proclaimed on the contrary the similarity between God's and man's modes of creation.

The second point is the confusion between natural and supernatural. The same 1630 censure on proposition 6 explicitly says that Van Helmont is trying to "bring back into the breast of Nature" certain acts of diabolic magic[41]. There were indeed many debates at the time between theologians, physicians and philosophers around the interpretation of miracles (notably miraculous healings) and acts of witchcraft: could they be explained by the natural powers of imagination alone (as had been for instance the position of Pomponazzi), or did they require the intervention of God in the first case, the Devil or evil spirits in the second case? The theologians were of course eager to preserve both reverence for God's miracles and distrust of the Devil's manoeuvres.[42] In this perspective, Vaenius' theory must have appeared doubly problematic, first because it makes it possible to give a natural explanation of acts of witchcraft, and second because he mixes the natural and supernatural levels, postulating the presence of a supernatural entity at the heart of human beings (cf. chapters 5 and 12).

At the end of the 1630 censure, both Van Helmont and Vaenius are described as 'disciples of Paracelsus, that is, of the Devil'.[43] Indeed the influence of Paracelsus, acknowledged by the two men and identified by the theologians, is beyond any doubt, both concerning the theory of the three elementary principles, and concerning the conception of imagination as being at the origin of a constant flow of images – in a double inner and outer movement – acting not only on the human mind but also on the world.[44]

A comparison with Fienus

In 1608, the Leuven professor of medicine Thomas Fienus (1567-1631) published a little treatise entirely devoted to the powers of imagination (*De viribus imaginationis*, Louvain: 1608).[45] He considers in particular the possible impact of imagination on bodies: if it can move a body (chapter 5), if it can cause diseases (chapter 10) or heal them (chapter 11), and most of all, if it can modify the body of a foetus (chapters 13 to 24). The treatise seems to have enjoyed modest success in the first half of the seventeenth century.[46] It may be useful to note that Fienus had been the teacher of Van Helmont at Leuven university – but that Van Helmont did not much esteem him.[47]

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[40] [*Propositio*] *erronea est haeresique proxima quatenus negat soli Deo vernaculum esse agere nonnulla solo nutu, contra illud Psalmistae Ps. 32: 'Ipse dixit et facta sunt, ipse mandavit et creata'* (Broeckx, "Notice" 297).
[41] *Testantur hoc exempla quae ex intimis diabolicae magiae adytis educta in naturae sinum conatur refundere* (...) (Broeckx, "Notice" 297).
[42] See Halleux, "Le procès d'inquisition" 1067; Giglioni G., *Immaginazione e malattia. Saggio su Jan Baptiste Van Helmont* (Milano: 2000) 58-67.
[43] (...) *duos hos in Paracelsi hoc est diaboli scola institutos discipulos, Venium et Helmontium* (...) (Broeckx, "Notice" 303).
[44] On Paracelsus and imagination, see for instance Koyré A., *Paracelse (1493-1541)* (Paris: 2004) 42-43 and Schott H., "Invisible diseases – Imagination and Magnetism: Paracelsus and the consequences", in Grell O.P. (ed.), *Paracelsus: the Man and his Reputation, his Ideas and their Transformation* (Leiden: 1998) 309-321.
[45] On this book: Rather L.J., "Thomas Fienus (1567-1631). Dialectical Investigation of the Imagination as Cause and Cure of Bodily Disease", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 41/4 (1967) 349-367. We use the edition of London, 1657.
[46] Giglioni, *Immaginazione* 62.
[47] Giglioni, *Immaginazione* 62 and note 75.

In general, Fienus is in line with the theories of Galen and Thomas Aquinas. Faithful to the traditional scholastic psychology, he considers imagination as one of the 'internal senses' of the sensitive soul, whose productions are labelled *species*. He defends the position according to which those *species* are cognitive, immanent and immaterial, and that as such, they cannot act directly on matter. They may however act indirectly, through the appetitive power, or through the emotions (which have an impact on the movement of the heart and on the movement of humours and spirits, possibly causing bodily alterations). Until this point, Fienus remains faithful to Thomas Aquinas. But the problematic point of the foetuses marked by their mother's imagination leeds Fienus to ascribe still another skill to imagination – the skill to guide and modify the conformative power:

> Quaestio IX, conclusio XXXIII: *Phantasia non solum mediante appetitu et motiva cordis, sed necessario enim etiam alio modo corpora immutat. Haec conclusio est contra D. Thomam; quippe qui ubique dicit animam non aliter corpora immutare, quam per appetitum et passiones et motum cordis. Est tamen vera. Etenim plurimae circa foetum virtute imaginationis eveniunt mutationes, quae non possunt solis animi passionibus adscribi, et quarum ratio dari non potest, nisi alia causa propinquior assignetur.* Conclusio XXXIV: *Phantasia etiam mutat corpora, dirigendo et modificando potentiam conformatricem.*
>
> *Question IX, conclusion XXXIII:* The imagination transforms the body not only by means of the appetite and movement of the heart, but by necessity also in another way. This conclusion contradicts the divine Thomas, who in fact says everywhere that the soul does not alter the body except through the appetite and emotions, and the movement of the heart. It is nevertheless true. For many alterations that cannot be ascribed to the emotions alone, the reasons for which cannot be given unless some nearer cause is assigned, take place in the foetus through power of the imagination. *Conclusion XXXIV*: the imagination alters bodies also by directing and modifying the conformative power.[48]

Fienus comes back to this point in chapter 13, and it occupies the whole second part of the treatise. Under conclusion 40 (p. 190 et sq.), Fienus lists all the authorities and historical examples that attest to the power of imagination on foetuses. At the end of this very lenghty enumeration, he notes on page 207 that, even if some of these cases are probaly false, it would be very daring to deny all of them: the power of imagination to change the foetus is thus patent.[49] Chapter 14 tackles the question: *how* does imagination change the foetus? – a difficult question, which seems to lie outside the grasp of the human mind. Fienus first summarizes the opinions of former scholars: Galen, Pliny, Avicenna, Isidorus, Augustine, Ficino etc. (209-212). He comes to the conclusion (*conclusio XLI*) that imagination is unable to change the foetus *per se et immediate* – in line with the former conclusions of the treatise; and that the *species phantastica* is neither efficacious nor productive *per se* (*conclusio XLII*, 216). If some of the changes can be explained by the mediation of passions and the movements of humours and spirits (*conclusio XLIII,* 224), it is however not the case for the 'signatures' observed on some babies (*conclusio XLIV,* 233). For those cases, Fienus repeats the hypothesis already given above: the imagination can cause peculiar *notae* on the foetus by directing its conformative power (*conclusio* XLV, 240). The mechanism is then further detailed: the *species* work as *exemplaria*, that is, they are taken as models by the conformative power (*conclusio* XLVI, 244). This explanation allows Fienus to remain faithful to the cognitive nature of *species,* which do not act *per se* but are merely 'looked at' by a natural power. It further implies that the *species* should be brought down to the place where the

[48] Trans. Rather, "Thomas Fienus" 358.

[49] Page 207: *His authoritatibus et exemplis, quae omnia negare nimis temerarium foret, videtur manifestum phantasiam foetum immutare. Non attuli equidem omnia haec exempla, quod credam omnia esse vera ; puto enim aliqua esse falsa* (…) *Ad conclusionis autem probationem sufficit multa vera esse, non omnia.*

conformative power acts – from the soul of parents to the soul of the baby, located in the uterus (260). This can happen, writes Fienus, through the soul's passions (*conclusio XLVIII*, 260), but only in very rare and specific occasions – notably, only when strong passions are aroused can the imagination mark the foetus (261). The theory is further elaborated in the following questions.

If we come back to our comparison with Vaenius'chapter, we note that Fienus starts from the same two premises as Vaenius: immaterial entities cannot directly act on material bodies;[50] and experience teaches that pregnant women's imaginations may have a physical impact on their foetuses. But from the same premises, the two men each draw a different conclusion: Fienus concludes that *species*, which are immaterial by definition, cannot be directly responsible for the observed changes; Vaenius concludes that the *species* must be corporeal after all.

A comparison with Zuccari

A last illuminating comparison can be drawn with the famous art theory treatise by Federico Zuccari, *L'Idea de'Pittori, scultori et architetti* (Turin: 1607). It has often been assumed that Vaenius might have met one of the Zuccari brothers (Taddeo or Federico) in Rome during his youth. The assertion can be traced back to the *Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste* (1675) by Joachim Sandrart;[51] but it is probably due to a misreading of Van Mander's text, where the mention of such a meeting concerned, instead of Vaenius himself, his master Lampsonius.[52] Anyway, it remains possible that Vaenius also had personal contacts with Federico and/or was influenced by his style[53] (as for Taddeo, he was already dead (1566) at the date of Vaenius' trip to Rome (end of the 1570s)).

Zuccari's artistic theories have long been associated with Neoplatonism, since the famous analysis of his treatise by Panofsky;[54] but more recent research tends to indicate that he was actually very faithful to traditional scholasticism.[55] Comparison of his theories with Vaenius' chapter 14 reveals clear convergences, but also several shades of difference – Zuccari remaining closer to orthodox theological views.

At the heart of Zuccari's thought lies the rich concept of *disegno,* the drawing – not only the external drawing, but also an "internal" and mental one. The *disegno interno* is

[50] See for example question 9, conclusion XXIX: *etenim intellectus est immaterialis, et ideo non potest agree in materiam corporalem.*

[51] Sandrart tells that Vaenius 'Rom und andere Städte des Kunst-trieffenden Italiens besucht, daselbst auch bey den Kunst-erfahrnesten, sonderlich bey Taddeo und Friderico Zuccaro, sich (…) gebässert' (edition Peltzer A.R. (München: 1925) 152).

[52] '(…) soo dat Octavio goede onderrichtinghe gheschiede van Lampsonio, hoewel hy self de const niet en oeffende : dan hadse in zijn jeught niet alleen geoeffent maer oock zijnen omgangh gehadt met de vermaertste Meesters van Christenheyt als met Taddeus Zuccaro, en Federico te Room' (Van Mander K., edition Miedema, I, 463; English translation 439).

[53] Van de Velde C., "Veen, Otto van", in Turner J. (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art,* vol. 32 (New York: 1996) 114-116.

[54] Panofsky E., *Idea. A concept in Art Theory* (1968) 85, especially ???. Zuccari himself says in chapter 5 that he follows Plato; but later in the same chapter he refers to Thomas Aquinas.

[55] Kieft G., "Zuccari, Scaligero e Panofsky", *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 33 (1989) 355-368 (esp. 357-358). See also Smeesters A., "The *Simulacra avorum* in jesuit latin poems by Wallius and Carrara: From Vergilian imitation to scholastic philosophy and art theory", in Enenkel K. – Melion W. – De Boer W. (ed.), *Jesuit Image Theory, 1540-1740*, Intersections (Leiden: 2016), 394-418.

defined by Zuccari as 'a form or Idea in our spirit which expressly and distinctly represents the things that our spirit intends'[56] – it can thus be considered more or less as an equivalent of Vaenius' 'products of imagination' and Fienus' *species*. Zuccari, in line with scholastic theory,[57] considers that God himself has ideas of this kind in his mind, ideas which are in fact inseparable from his very divine nature, and through which he created the world and has full knowledge of it (chapter 5). It is precisely because he is an image of God that man has the capacity to produce such an internal drawing:

> [Dio], havendo per sua bontà, & per mostrare in picciolo ritratto l'eccellenza dell'arte sua divina, creato l'huomo ad imagine & similitudine sua, quanto all'anima, (…) volle anco dargli facoltà di formare in se medesimo un Dissegno interno intellettivo, accioche col mezzo di questo conoscesse tutte le creature (…) & in oltre accioche (…) potesse produrre infinite cose artificiali simili alle naturali (…).[58]
>
> After God – in his goodness and to show a little portrait of the excellence of his divine art – created man in his own image and likeness, as for the soul, (…) he also wanted to give him the faculty to shape in himself an intellectual *disegno interno,* so that he could, in this way, know all creatures (…) and also in order that he could produce an infinity of artificial things similar to the natural ones (…).

This divine filiation symbolically appears in the word *disegno* itself. At the end of his treatise, Zuccari indeed proposes a fanciful etymology of the word: *disegno* would be a composition of *Dio* and *segno*, with the signification of 'sign of God', *segno di Dio.* In this way, Zuccari supports the complete freedom of human inventiveness by assimilating it to the divine creation: for the artist, to create consists in imitating, not nature, but the activity of God himself. Zuccari however takes care to underline the differences between the divine and human *disegni interni*:

> Ma l'huomo nel formar questo Dissegno interno è molto differente da Dio; perche ove Iddio ha un sol Dissegno (…), comprensivo di tutte le cose, il quale non è differente da lui (…), l'huomo in se stesso forma varii Dissegni (…), e però il suo Dissegno è accidente, oltre il che hà l'origine sua bassa, cioè da i sensi.[59]
>
> But man, in the shaping of this *disegno interno,* is very different from God; because where God has a single *disegno*, including everything and not different from him (…), man shapes in himself various *disegni* (…), and his *disegno* is accidental, besides the fact that it has a low origin, coming from the senses.

Zuccari is most interested in the fact that the *disegno interno* can serve as a model for the artist when he realizes his artworks – in the same way as God created the universe. In his theory, *every* man is, admittedly, in the image of God in his ability to conceive a *disegno interno*; but full similitude with the act of creation is only accomplished by *artists* (or craftsmen) who bring their conceptions into matter. For Vaenius, by contrast, the very act of imagining already constitutes a full act of creation, generating real beings. The root of this divergence lies in the status given to the internally produced images. Vaenius makes them corporal, able as such to have a physical impact on the external world. Zuccari, on the

[56] Chapter 3: 'il Disegno interno in generale è un'idea e forma nell'intelletto rappresentante espressamente e distintamente la cosa intesa da quello.'
[57] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica,* Ia, quaest. XV, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: 1853).
[58] Zuccari, *L'Idea* 14.
[59] Zuccari, *L'Idea* 14.

contrary, says from the beginning that the *disegno interno* 'non è materia, non è corpo' (chapter 3); if it can be at the origin of material transformations, it is only as something one *looks at* to take it as a model. The same function of *exemplar* appeared in Fienus' theory of the s*pecies*; he went a step further than traditional scholasticism, admitting that a s*pecies* could be taken as model by a natural conformative power independently of man's will – but he restricted this case to very specific and rare occasions.

Vaenius' conception of the artistic creation

Zuccari's text has allowed us to make the link between the theory of imagination and the topic of artistic production. This link, as we have seen, was not explicitly made in chapter 14 of the *Conclusiones*. By contrast, the last chapter (n° 20) of the *Conclusiones* deals with works of art, not insofar as they emanate from human imagination, but as they have an impact on the spirit of the viewer [fig. 2]. The chapter is concerned with the utility of sacramental and devotional images as spurs to faith, or as the title indicates, with 'How Corporeal Things and External Ceremonies Are Efficacious at Moving the Deity in Man'. We are facing here a theory of the efficaciousness of images, or more precisely a theory of the reception and interactions with the image. Vaenius proclaims that the forms and the *species* can induce man to become more like God, and to call forth good and pious impulses. More precisely, images, ceremonies and pious signs (established by God himself) relating to the coming, the life and the death of Christ enable these *entia realia* to enter the soul, and thus prompt the deity in man to incline towards the saviour.[60] This is illustrated (in a kind of meta-image, an image about the image) by the second and last mimetic representation of the book, after the allegory of *Ecclesia* in chapter 19: the effigy of a crucifix[61] linked by a ray (labelled Z) to the deity in man, a ray standing for the bodily and spiritual flow of images into the soul.Now, what can we infer from both chapters 14 and 20 on the question of the forces of imagination applied no longer to the field of theology, but to the field of the visual arts, the very field practised by Vaenius? As far as we can reconstruct his ideas, Vaenius must have conceived of the artist as a man endowed both with a fertile imagination (able to produce numerous or remarkable *species*) and with manual and technical dexterity (enabling him to reproduce in matter, in a visible way, the products of his imagination – images which admittedly already have a body, but so subtle that it cannot be apprehended by the senses). In addition, Vaenius was acutely aware of the fact that artists' productions caused in return an imaginative process in the person of the viewer, a process potent enough to impact on the soul's salvation – artists' responsibility was thus far-reaching. In brief, the artist would have the power to project and in a way embody his imaginative creations which would in turn exert their power on the beholder's imagination in order to incarnate in himself what is depicted.

The power of the painter

This conception of the artist is strikingly epitomized in emblem 70 of Vaenius's *Emblemata Horatiana* [fig. 3], the first of his three emblem books, published in Antwerp in 1607. Even though imagination is not explicitly the topic of this emblem, the power of imagination is nonetheless at its heart. The image shows in the foreground a painter and a

[60] Page 42: *Per corpus, eius quinque organa, tum et per spiritum naturalem rationalem,* (…) *offeruntur animae variae formae, ac species, quae deinde movent Deitatem hominis ad inclinandum versus creatorem, aut a creatore* (…) *Per imagines enim, ceremonias ac significationes pias de adventu, vita, ac morte salvatoris, aliaque innumera* (*quae entia sunt realia), quidam influere possunt per corpus et spiritum radij Z, adusque animam, tum & Deitatem hominis, illamque movere ad inclinandum versus salvatorem* (…).

[61] The choice for this *figura* is obvious as it is by the Crucifixion that God has united himself to men.

poet. The painter is represented nearly turning his back to the spectator, painting what can be called a chimera on a canvas placed on an easel, while the poet, crowned with laurels, gazes thoughtfully at this canvas, holding his quill in his right hand, either on the verge of pursuing his writing or at the moment where he stopped it. Behind them, two men stand up, one of whom is holding up what looks like a urinal that they both examine. In the background, one distinguishes a forge about which several men bustle, striking an anvil and working with fire. The page opposite the engraving presents the motto *Cuique suum studium* ("To each one his profession") followed by five quotations, two from Horace's *Epistles*,[62] two from Greek comic dramatists known through fragments (Amphis[63] and Hipparchus – in fact, Menander[64]), and the last one from Ovid's *Letters from the Black Sea.*[65] A French eight-verse poem was added to the second edition on the initiative of Vaenius, commenting directly on the engraving and giving its meaning:

> Le peintre aux couleurs, à la plume
> S'entend le poète, à l'urinal
> Le médecin, le mareschal
> S'entend au fait de son enclume.
> Au contraire, celuy
> Fait justement à reprendre
> Qui s'avance d'entreprendre
> Sur le métier d'autruy.

A quatrain was moreover added in the 1612 edition, also on the initiative of Vaenius, where the meaning of the engraving is slightly modified:

> L'un se plait à la forge, l'autre à la peinture,
> L'autre à ronger ses doigts pour composer des vers
> Le plaisir des humains et l'estude est divers
> Selon que d'un chascun diverse est la nature.

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[62] Horace, *Epistles,* I, 14, 44 : *Quam scit uterque libens censebo exerceat artem* ('What I shall advise is that each contentedly practise the trade he understands') (Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, *The Loeb Classical Library* (London – Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1947) 340-341); Horace, *Epistles*, II, 1, 114-116 : *navem agere ignarus navis timet; habrotonum aegro / non audet nisi qui didicit dare; quod medicorum est / promittunt medici; tractant fabrilia fabri* ('a man who knows nothing of a ship fears to handle one ; no one dares to give southernwood to the sick unless he has learnt its use ; doctors undertake a doctor's work ; carpenters handle carpenters' tools") (*Ibid*. 406-407).

[63] Amphis, fragment 3 (= Stob. IV, 18, 1) (*Poetae comici Graeci. vol. 2: Agathenor-Aristonymus,* ed. Kassel R. – Austin C. (Berlin – New York: 1991) 215); Latin translation as given by Vaenius: *Non est ullum humani infortunii / solatium dulcius in vita, quam ars: / Dum enim animus disciplinae vacat suae, / Laetanter praeternavigat et obliviscitur calamitates* ('There is no sweeter consolation in life for human misfortune, than art: indeed, while the spirit devotes itself to its discipline, it joyfully sails past and forgets its calamities', trans. A. Smeesters).

[64] Menander, fragment 68 (= Stob. IV, 18, 5) (*Poetae comici Graeci. vol. 6.2: Menander,* ed. Kassel R. – Austin C. (Berlin – New York: 1998) 78); Latin translation as given by Vaenius: *Paterna bona, tempus interdum facit / aliena, servans interim corpora: / Unum autem vitae praesidium in artibus situm est* ('Some occasion alienates your patrimony, while it spares, we'll say, your mere body; but secure livelihood exists in handicraft') (Menander, *The principal fragments,* trans. F. G. Allinson, *The Loeb Classical Library* (London – New York: 1921) 321).

[65] Ovid, *Ex Ponto*, II, 9, 47-48: *adde, quod ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes / emollit mores nec sinit esse feros* ('*Note too that a faithful study of the liberal arts humanizes character and permits it not to be cruel*') (Ovid, *Tristia. Ex Ponto*, trans. A. Leslie Wheeler, *The Loeb Classical Library* (London – New York: 1924) 362-363).

On the one hand, everyone should content himself or herself with doing what he or she knows how to do well; on the other hand, one should follow his or her own nature, 'son génie en l'art ou la science', as a later edition says, do what we enjoy most (in order to do it well). Propriety and decorum, or *aptum*, are the key words in these verses, either in terms of expertise or in terms of inclination. Furthermore, these poems and quotations are all in praise of art, which is not surprising as we shall see.

However, the full meaning of the engraving is not exhausted in the meaning of the accompanying quotations and verses, and the image is far less illustrative than it first appears. It contains other clues, which, combined with the textual parts, open the interpretation of the emblem up to the status of the arts, especially painting and poetry. To understand the message delivered by Vaenius in this image, one should recall first the place occupied by Horace in this system. Indeed, the position of painting and poetry in the engraving keeps evoking the paragone between these 'sister arts', based on the famous *Ut pictura poesis* Horatian dictum, from verse 361 of *The Art of Poetry*. Yet this quotation seems to be missing from among the quotations of emblem 70, although it is obviously the tutelary authority of the whole book as Vaenius paraphrases and expands it in his preface. It is well known that theoreticians and artists reorientated the Horatian formula to support their claim regarding the liberal status of painting: the comparison was meant to benefit painting, and the original 'Poetry will be like painting' became 'Painting will be like poetry'. The paraphrastic preface of the emblem book follows exactly this path: the intention of the painter is to defend painting as a noble art, and the image as being equal to poetry.[66] This gives therefore a biased perception of emblem 70, and certainly takes the first step to an even more subtle claim, as we shall see now.

In addition to the *Ut pictura poesis* quotation, which is present without being expressed and is thus latent in the emblem, and in addition to the fact that the figure on the canvas faithfully reproduces the chimeric creature described by Horace in this same text, there is still another key quotation in the emblem, also (half) hidden; it appears as an inscription in the lower part of the canvas, and only its first word is unambiguously visible, '*Pictoribus*', the first word of verses 9 and 10 of *The Art of Poetry*: '*Pictoribus atque poetis quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas*' in the following passage:

> Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
> iungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas
> undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
> desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
> spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?
>
> (…)
>
> 'Pictoribus atque poetis
> quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas'.
> Scimus, et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim;
> sed non ut placidis coeant immitia, non ut
> serpentes avibus geminentur, tigribus agni.[67]
>
> If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a black and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favored with a private view, refrain

[66] Chatelain J.-M., *Livres d'emblèmes et de devises. Une anthologie (1531-1735)* (Paris: 1993) 136-137. On the difficult interpretation of this emblem, see Thøfner M., "Making a chimera: invention, collaboration and the production of Otto Vaenius's *Emblemata Horatiana*", in Adams A. – Van der Weij M. (ed.), *Emblems of the Low Countries. A Book Historical Perspective* (Geneva: 2003) 17-44, esp. 42-43.
[67] Horace, *The Art of Poetry,* 1-5 and 9-13.

> from laughing? (…) 'Painters and poets', you say, 'have always had an equal right in hazarding anything.' We know it: this licence we poets claim and in our turn we grant the like; but not so far that savage should mate with tame, or serpents couple with birds, lambs with tigers.[68]

Now this quotation has been quickly interpreted by the painters as a leave granted to the painter, asserting his autonomy of imagination, his freedom to achieve a chimera, as it were.[69] However, the rest of the quotation is almost entirely concealed in the hatchings of the plate, that is the shadow of the painter's body on his canvas. The work of the engraver is thus achieved in the shadow of the painter's work. But it is precisely what is in the shadow that is the most important and significant thing, what gives the painting its soul, like the alchemical "*opus magnum*" which the forge and the work with fire in the background echo. The relevance of this alchemical allusion is reinforced by the preparatory drawing [fig. 4], in which the forge is the general setting of the scene, and where the work with fire is stressed. It also echoes chapter 16 of the *Conclusiones* where the alchemical operations are described '*arte et igne*' ('by art and fire'), while the 'doctors' in the engraving, scrutinizing a urinal, could also well be alchemists examining the result of an operation of the *opus magnum*, just heated on the nearby fire. One can also note that, in this setting, the painter occupies the obvious primary position, compared to the position of the poet. Alchemy truly pervades the whole oeuvre of Vaenius, and while he explicitly acknowledges his alchemical inspiration in the *Conclusiones*, he tends to conceal it elsewhere, as in his emblems.[70] Now, as the *Conclusiones* make clear, the power of imagination is based on the Paracelsian conception of matter and on the tripartition of all things into body, soul and spirit. As a consequence, when linking subtly the freedom of the artist's *inventio* with alchemical work, Vaenius is asserting the power of imagination. What is moreover striking in Vaenius's engraving is, on the one hand, the materialization of Horace's chimera as the work of the painter, taking up the challenge contained in the Horatian inscription, and, on the other hand, the strange likeness of this figure with the sphinx, that is, the very form of the enigma. The work of the artist is thus a mysterious one, and one of absolute freedom by virtue of his inner model, drawn from his imagination and expressed through an enigmatic chimera.

The attitude of the poet is even more enigmatic, even if one tends to understand it as an anxious or melancholic attitude, based on the poem added in 1612, which explained that the poet bites his fingers to make verses. Whatever his feelings, which we can only guess, his intense gaze at the painting indicates at least some kind of fascination for, even inspiration from, the powerful chimeric model of the painter. This chimeric model is itself the manifestation of an interior idea, of the *disegno*, *mise en abyme* in the engraving, which, as the visual production of the painter Vaenius, is the manifestation of his own idea of the painter and the relationship between painting and poetry. Emblem 70 consists then in a series of embeddings. Not only does it mean to represent the Horatian paragone, with a dominant stress on the fascinating power of painting and the freedom of imagination of the painter, but it also represents Vaenius's own gesture as a learned painter – a painter of speaking images and mute poetry, in which he places the highest secrets and truth.

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[68] Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica,* trans. Rushton Fairclough 451.

[69] Chastel A., "Le *dictum Horatii* : *quidlibet audendi potestas* et les artistes (XIIIe-XVIe siècle)", *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 121 (1977) 30-45.

[70] For an example of hidden alchemical inspiration in other emblems, see Guiderdoni A., "Modes de penser allégoriques au service des sciences au début du XVII[e] siècle: dire et masquer la nouveauté", in Rolet A. (ed.), *allégorie et symbole : voies de dissidence ? De l'Antiquité à la Renaissance* (Rennes: 2012) 430-431.

Images and imagination, a key topic in the Conclusiones?

The chapters we have analyzed (chapter 14 but also 20) appear as essential chapters giving the key to the interpretation of the *Conclusiones*: the entire treatise could be therefore read through the lens of the image and imagination issue. The general purpose of the book is to demonstrate that man is free, responsible for his acts and for his salvation. The link between the question of freedom and that of imagination now appears more clearly: as man is an image of God, his freedom best reveals itself when man accomplishes this similitude to his Creator – and he does so by reproducing through his productive imagination the creative gesture of God. Imagination, far from being peripheral to the issue of free will, even constitutes one of its founding principles.

Moreover, art and images serve in the *Conclusiones* a conciliatory ideal. They appear as vectors of the conciliation of opposites and of the resolution of conflict in a context of religious and political crisis, which also coincides with a crisis of the image following the iconoclastic troubles. In a way, the conclusion of the *Conclusiones* is a claim to an authentic faith in the efficacy of the image and art to pacify the troubled minds of the time.

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