7 Art and Artist in the Age of the Counter-Reformation

Borghini's criticism of Cellini was intended to rationalise the arts. Rather than reproducing the objects of their representations or following their individual interests, painters and sculptors were invited to perform their tasks in accordance with the demands of the Republic of Florence. Against this backdrop, the personality of the artist was either irrelevant, unimportant, or even detrimental for the efficient and continuous production of works of art. While this characterisation of the artist might be true for Vincenzio Borghini, not all seem to have agreed with these strict principles. The artist's individual inclinations, particularly in the domain of sacred images, played an important role in the production of religious paintings which, for religious painters, were considered to be a necessary prerequisite. While Borghini argues in favour of a separation of art and artist, the art theory of the Counter-Reformation increasingly stressed the importance of a spiritual unity between the artist and his works. Only when endowed with a deep faith and a thorough understanding of the Christian mysteries might an artist be able to create religious paintings.

7.1 The Ideal of the *artefice cristiano*

When art theorists of the Cinquecento discussed the positive effects of religious paintings, they often referred to the life of Saint Luke. Primarily celebrated as the evangelist who described the life of the Virgin Mary and the infancy of Christ in detail, he was also known as a painter. He was particularly famous for his representations of the Virgin Mary. According to hagiographic legends, Mary gave Saint Luke the permission to paint her portrait and used to sit as his model while holding Jesus in her arms.[1] Later sources enhanced the account and reported that the evangelist had been granted a vision of the Mother of God, or that she had

1 Andratschke 2010, pp. 1ff.

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guided Saint Luke's hand while he was holding the pencil to depict her.[2] These Byzantine paintings, highly venerated and miraculously increasing in number over time, were seen as an authentic evidence of her appearance. Similar to other images which were thought to represent the true likeness of Mary or Christ – for example, the veil of Veronica or the so-called *acheiropoieta* (icons made without hands) – such early Christian paintings were thought to embody the presence of the divine and were highly esteemed. Due to their intimacy with the heavenly spheres, they provided the ideal background for prayers and were even believed to cause miracles.[3]

During the Renaissance, the image of Saint Luke painting the Virgin became a popular subject. Painters took pride in their holy lineage to the saint, made him the patron of their guilds, and even painted their own likenesses into the facial features of the evangelist. When Vasari was bestowed the commission to decorate the private chapel of the artists of the Accademia del disegno in the SS. Annunziata in Florence with a representation of Saint Luke in 1565, Vasari identified with the first Christian painter by making Saint Luke assume his own characteristical physiognomy (Fig. 56).[4] Similar examples can be found in works by Rogier van der Weyden, Maerten van Heemskerck, and Giulio Romano.

As is shown by the veneration of Saint Luke, divine inspiration was considered a helpful if not necessary ingredient for the success as an artist. This was particularly true for the depiction of saints. Artists who did not have a deep faith and a sound soul were thought to be incapable of capturing the beauty of heavenly creatures. According to the principles of *adaequatio* and analogy, heuristic methods frequently used in the Renaissance, the painter had to be virtuous and pious to be able to conceive and represent holy subjects.[5] The art literature relates several accounts of artists who had difficulties depicting saints until they had turned their mind to God and purified their souls. A frequently retold story from Florence concerns the fortune of a certain painter called Bartolomeo. When given the task to paint an *Annunciation* for the confraternity of the Servites of Mary in 1252, he was happy to accept the commission, but was unable to execute the last part of his fresco. No matter how hard he tried, painting the face of the Virgin Mary proved too difficult. Desperately, the painter decided to take a break, confessed his sins, and returned to his unfinished work only to see the face of the

2 Belting 2005, pp. 209 ff.
3 Belting 1990, pp. 57 ff.
4 For the chapel of St. Luke and its iconography see Summers 1969.
5 Cfr. Endres 2012.

Figure 56 Giorgio Vasari, Saint Luke painting the Virgin, 1565, Florence, SS. Annunziata (Cappella di S. Luca)

Virgin miraculously completed.[6] Just as Jesus had been immaculately conceived by a Virgin who was free from the original sin, a painter had to purify his soul before conceiving true and authentic images of God.

In the art literature of the Cinquecento, the *pictor christianus* became a recurrent theme; many biographies stressed the particular faith and devotion of artists.[7] In 1538, the Portuguese painter and humanist Francisco de Hollanda advised his readers about the great spirituality requested of painters of religious imagery. Like the first Christian artists advised to decorate the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament, a painter should be enlightened by the spirit of God.[8] Bartolomeo Ammannati drew on the aesthetic benefits of the *artefice cristiano* when citing Michelangelo in a letter to the members of the Accademia del disegno in August 1582. He claimed that good Christians would always make good and beautiful figures.[9] Vasari's *Vite* contains the lives of six artists who were friars and these lives contributed to the ideas on the moral conduct and artistic virtues of pious painters.[10] The life which renders Vasari's conception of the ideal *artefice cristiano* best is probably that of Fra Angelico. Following the ideas of Domenico di Giovanni da Corella, who in 1465 interpreted the external beauty of Fra Angelico's frescoes as a reflection of the internal beauty of his soul,[11] Vasari pays close attention to the similarities between the painter's character and work. Fra Angelico entered the Dominican Order of his own will at the age of 23, withdrew from the material temptations of the world, and lived a simple and devout life in the ser-

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6 Da Cortona/Ottonelli 1652, p. 185: "È fama, che l'anno 1252 in Fiorenza un Pittore, stando in Peccato, cominciò più volte à dipingere il volto della Santissima Nuntiata, nè mai fece cosa di sua soddisfattione: onde sospettando, ciò esser cagionato da' suoi peccati, risolse di purgarli con la Confessione, la quale fatta egli s'accinse all'opera, preparando le cose necessarie, delle quali però non si servì, per condurre il capo dell'immagine, perche accostatosi per cominciar il lavoro, trova con so gran stupore la sacra testa fatta con tanta gratia, e maestà, che da lui all'hora, e poi da altri fù stimato, che quella testa era stata fatta miracolosamente coll'Arte d'Angelico Pittore: e tutta Cittá concorse à vedere, e venerare una tanta maraglia." This legend was first coined by the confraternity of the Servites of Mary in Florence in the 14th century to promote their order. For a discussion of the sources and causes of this legend see Waźbiński 1985.

7 See Wimböck 2002, pp. 23–35.

8 De Hollanda 1538 (1899), pp. 109–111.

9 Bottari/Ticozzi 1822–1825, vol. 3, p. 539: "E, facendo qui fine a questo mio ragionamento, pregherò il Signore Dio che vi conservi sempre nella santissima grazia sua e vi feliciti in tutte l'opere vostre, sovvenendomi d'una parola, che già mi disse Michelagnolo Buonarruoti, et è: Che i buoni cristiani sempre facevano le buone e belle figure."

10 O'Connor 1998. Of course, pious artists were also available outside of religious orders. The *Vita* of Pietro Cavallini is a good example of a religious artist who was not asssociated with confraternities.

11 For Domenico di Giovanni da Corella's *Theotocon* cfr. Amato 2008, p. 75.

vice of God until his death in 1455. Likewise, his paintings and frescoes are described as humble, and it is said that his representations of saints captured their true likeness because they were simple and devout (Fig. 57). According to Vasari, this achievement was probably the result of Fra Angelico's working technique. He considered the first draft of a painting a gift of God, so he engaged in prayer before starting to work and never retouched or improved any of his frescoes.[12] Applying the literary topos of the *furor poeticus* to the paintings of Fra Angelico, one could say that the friar was possessed by a moderate form of *furor spiritualis,* which allowed him to produce images of saints with great diligence.[13]

12 Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 2, p. 520: "Insomma fu questo non mai abastanza lodato padre in tutte l'opere e ragionamenti suoi umilissimo e modesto, e nelle sue pitture facile e devoto; et i Santi che egli dipinse hanno più aria e somiglianza di santi che quegli di qualunche altro. Aveva per costume non ritoccare né racconciar mai alcuna sua dipintura, ma lasciarle sempre in quel modo che erano venute la prima volta, per creder (secondo ch'egli diceva) che così fusse la volontà di Dio. Dicono alcuni che fra' Giovanni non arebbe messo mano ai penelli, se prima non avesse fatto orazione. Non fece mai Crucifisso ch'e' non si bagnasse le gote di lagrime: onde si conosce nei volti e nell'attitudini delle sue figure la bontà del sincero e grande animo suo nella religione cristiana."

13 The immediate expression of the artist's ideas was seldom judged positively. A rare case is Donatello, who is said to have shown artistic judgment by expressing his ideas instantly. Cfr. Vasari 1568 (1878–1885), vol. 2, p. 171: "[…] pare anco che nelle bozze molte volte, nascendo in un sùbito dal furore dell'arte, si sprima il suo concetto in pochi colpi, e che per contrario lo stento e la troppa diligenza alcuna fiata toglia la forza et il sapere a coloro che non sanno mai levare le mani dall'opera che fanno. E chi sa che l'arti del disegno, per non dir la pittura solamente, sono alla poesia simili, sa ancora che come le poesie dettate dal furore poetico sono le vere e le buone e migliori che le stentate, così l'opere degli uomini eccellenti nell'arti del disegno sono migliori quando sono fatte a un tratto dalla forza di quel furore che quando si vanno ghiribizzando a poco a poco con istento e con fatica; e chi ha da principio, come si dee avere, nella idea quello che vuol fare, camina sempre risoluto alla perfezzione con molta agevolezza." For the concept of immediate expression see Janson 1961, for *furor* in the early modern period see Magnago Lampugnani 2020.

Figure 57 Fra Angelico, Annunciation, ca. 1440, Florence, S. Marco

7.2 Characteristics of Religious Paintings

Vasari's description of the life and work of Fra Angelico was clearly indebted to the new ideas about religious imagery that were promulgated by the advocates of the ecumenical Council of Trent (1545–1563). Since parts of the Protestant Reformation had shown a more critical attitude towards the use of paintings and statues in sacral contexts, the Catholic Church was eager to develop guidelines for the appropriate use of the representations of saints.[14] Although lascivious paintings and idolatry had always been banned by the Church, the Tridentine Council re-structured and re-confirmed its ancient convictions about the legitimate use of images when faced with the iconoclastic movements of the Protestant Reformation, which reached a new peak in the early 1560s.[15] During the last session of the Council of Trent in December 1563, it was stipulated that images of sacred objects were indeed legitimate and that religious imagery was welcomed as a support for religious teaching and Catholic propaganda. One crucial passage of the Tridentine decree, which circumscribes the appropriateness of the use of images, demands that "by paintings or other representations, the people is instructed, and confirmed in the habit of remembering, and continually revolving in the mind the articles of faith" and further, that images may cause people to "be excited to adore and love God, and to cultivate piety."[16]

Although the rather vague decree did not contain concrete instructions, it had a considerable impact on the arts. Many art theorists, including Gilio da Fabriano, Raffaello Borghini, and Romano Alberti, referred to the ideas of the Counter-Reformation when describing the qualities of religious imagery. Focussed on the imagery's ability to stimulate piety, the theorists believed that such paintings should be based on clarity, simplicity, and historical probability. The depiction of stories from the Bible or the representation of saints and apostles was meant to illustrate the theological dogmas of the Catholic Church as a means of educating illiterate people. Of course, this conservative conception of sacred art affected the duties of the artist. To ensure the educational impact of their paintings, artists ideally assumed the role of learned orators, familiar with the texts of the Bible and the rhetorical methods of stimulating piety. In this context, Horace's widely read *Ars poetica* and his influential thoughts on the emotional affection of poets proved to be crucial for the art literature of the Counter-Reformation. According to Horace, a speaker must himself achieve a state of excitement if he is to evoke emotions in

14 Hecht 2012 provides a detailed analysis of Catholic treatises that are concerned with the usage of religious images in the age of the Counter-Reformation.

15 For a graphic discussion of the various models of venerating images see Wirth 2000.

16 As cited in Hall 2011, p. 20.

his auditors.[17] By applying this principle to the painters of sacred art, many art theorists of the Cinquecento stressed the importance of Christian faith and devotion. Only an artist who is imbued with true religious feelings can display them in his works and thus emotionally affect and teach the beholders of his paintings.

Romano Alberti's *Trattato della nobiltà della pittura* (1585) is a good example of the application of rhetorical elements to religious paintings. He compares the art of oratory with the art of painting, asserting that the latter is far more effective at evoking people's passions and showing a schematic understanding of the causality between religious artists and their art. According to Alberti, painters have to be faithful to God if they want to affect the feelings of the people with their works.[18] Similar examples can be found in Federico Borromeo's *De pictura sacra,* drafted at the end of the Cinquecento and published in 1624.[19] As is shown by some of Alberti's references, he was directly inspired by the writings of the influential archbishop Gabriele Paleotti. In 1563 Paleotti had actively participated in the Council of Trent, where he was specifically concerned with the visual arts. Although unfinished, his *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (1582) can be described as a detailed reference manual for applying the Tridentine decree.[20] By applying the rhetorical principles of *docere, delectare,* and especially *movere* to religious paintings, Paleotti showed great confidence in the persuasive powers of religious images. As a medium of information, preservation, and mass conversion, they could serve as important ammunition in the fight against the virulent spread of protestantism. Begun in the 1570s and published in 1582, his treatise not only pays attention to the appropriate use of images in sacred and profane places by describing their various forms and functions, but discusses the figure of the artist as well.[21] According to Paleotti, painters of religious images had the duty to promote the Christian faith by producing clear, legible, and devout representations. It was thus necessary for the artist to be familiar with the texts of the Bible, the

17 Horace (1942), pp. 459–461: "If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself"/"si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi." (*Ars poetica,* 102–105). For a discussion of this concept cfr. Abrams 1953, pp. 71f. and Rudd 1976, pp. 170–181.

18 Alberti 1585 (1960–1962), p. 231: "Giova ancora alli pittori la pittura cristiana, incitandoli a dover esser sprituali per esprimere li affetti devoti, i quali se non sentono in lor stessi, non possono produrli facilmente. E di più, come potranno unir li altri con Dio, se essi da quello seran disuniti?"

19 Borromeo 1624 (2010), p. 46: "Quin etiam sicuti vanus est Oratoris conatus ad permovendos aliorum animos, nisi suum ipse animum moverit prius, ita pictoribus cunctis evenire arbitror, ut nisi ipsi prius pium aliquem animi sui motum excitare conati fuerint, nequeant postea operibus dare suis id quod sibi deest, pietatem nempe et laudabiles animi sensus."

20 For a general survey of Paleotti's treatise see Steinemann 2006.

21 For Paleotti's ideas on the *artefice cristiano* see Zacchi 1985.

traditional iconography, and the doctrines of the church. Furthermore, Paleotti was concerned with the spiritual constitution of artists and advised them that they need to be devout. Unsurprisingly, faith in God was described as indispensable for the production of effectual religious imagery:

> "[I pittori] non possono rappresentare, nelle figure che fanno, quella maniera di devozione ch'essi non hanno né sentono dentro di sé; onde si vede per isperienza che poche imagini oggi si dipingono, che produchino questo effetto. […] non basta solo esser buono artefice, ma, oltre l'eccellenza dell'arte, essendo egli di nome e di professione cristiano, ricercano da lui l'imagini ch'egli farà, un animo e affeto cristiano, essendo questa qualità inseparabile dalla persona sua, e tale ch'egli è ubligato di mostrarla ovunque sia bisogno."[22]

Similar to Vasari's first version of Fra Angelico's life, in which he stressed the equation of pious artists and pious art right from the beginning,[23] Paleotti's treatise draws on analogies between the mind of the painter and his works to promote his threefold image of an ideal artist in the service of the Church: The *artefice cristiano* had to be pious, inspired by his faith in God, and simple and unlicentious in his style of living.

7.3 Francesco Bocchi and the *imagine miracolosa*

It is against this cultural background that the well-known image of the Annunciation in the SS. Annunziata in Florence received new attention during the second half of the Cinquecento. As demanded by the art literature of the Counter-Reformation, it displayed the Annunciation to the Virgin in accordance with the text of the Bible (Lk 1, 26–38), showing the archangel Gabriel announcing the birth of Christ to a modest and devout Mary (Fig. 58). Furthermore, the historical appropriateness of the representation was matched by its style. Neither licentious nor capricious, the fresco possesses a simple, descriptive appeal and complied with the demand of legibility. The legends attached to the image since the 14th century

22 Paleotti 1582 (1960–1962), pp. 120, 136.

23 Vasari 1550 (1966–1997), vol. 3, pp. 273 f.: "Certamente chi lavora opere ecclesiastiche e sante doverrebbe egli ancora del continovo essere ecclesiastico e santo, perché si vede che quando elle sono operate da persone che poco credino e manco stimino la religione, fanno spesso cadere in mente appetiti disonesti e voglie lascive; onde nasce il biasimo dell' opre nel disonesto e la lode nell' artificio e nella virtù."

Figure 58 Attributed to Jacopo di Cione, Annunciation, ca. 1360, Florence, SS. Annunziata

proved to be advantageous for its reception as well. According to popular belief, it either belonged to the group of *acheiropoieta* or was actually painted by Saint Luke himself. Furthermore, representations of the Annunciation reaffirmed the importance of Mary as indispensable for the salvation of mankind and acknowledged her active participation in God's plans; this conscious contribution of the Mother of God had been negated by Martin Luther. In short, the *Annunciation* in the SS. Annunziata, venerated by Gabriele Paleotti and other protagonists of the Catholic Reform, provided the ideal context for the discussion of the precepts of religious art and artists in a time of theological instability and uncertainty.[24]

Francesco Bocchi's treatise *Sopra l'imagine miracolosa della Santissima Nunziata di Fiorenza* is an interesting compendium of these ideas about the image.[25]

24 See Waźbiński 1985 and Waźbiński 1987b. According to Miklós Boskovits, the paintings was made by Jacopo di Cione around 1360. Giorgio Vasari attributed it to Pietro Cavallini.

25 For a discussion of the works of Bocchi see Schröder 2003 and Frangenberg 2016.

The monograph of this Florentine historian and art theorist, published in 1592, gives an account of the various miracles associated with the fresco, highlights its beauty and simplicity, and recounts the legend of its miraculous creation in 1252. According to Bocchi, the painter was unable to paint the face of the Virgin and decided to confess his sins. He took a nap on the scaffolding underneath the image, and when he returned to his work he saw that the fresco was miraculously finished.[26]

In narrating this legend, Bocchi paid particular attention to the question of authorship, stressing the divine origins of the image. Although parts of the fresco had been painted by the artist, he ascribed its supernatural power and beauty entirely to the intervention of God. The face of the Virgin was painted not by the artist, but by the hand of God.[27] Hence its unexcelled beauty, which was unusual and *supra humano* at a time when the art of painting was considered to be immature or *rozo.*[28] As is emphasized by Bocchi, even artists of the Cinquecento like Michelangelo or Andrea del Sarto would have been unable to paint a face of similar beauty.[29] A woodcut from Luca Ferrini's *Corona di sessanta tre miracoli della Nunziata di Firenze,* published in the year following Bocchi's treatise, gives visual expression to Bocchi's understanding of the creation of the fresco. Like other illustrations of the legend from the same period, it shows the sleeping artist against the background of a simplified reproduction of the image in the SS. Annunziata, while a miniaturized God paints the face of the Virgin (Fig. 59).

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26 Bocchi 1592, pp. 26 f.: "[…] con molta voglia si era messo il pittore all' alta impresa: il quale, poscia che si fu confessato, & hebbe preso il santissimo Sacramento, avanzandosi, quanto poteva piu in suo artifizio, incominciò l'opera, che tanto era da' Servi di Maria bramata. […] Sgomentato adunque, e disperatosi del fine, come piacque a Dio, un giorno sul ponte, dove dipingeva, si addormentò; e isvegliato poco appresso trovò miracolosamente finito il santo volto della Madonna."

27 Bocchi 1592, p. 26: "Per questo egli non si puote, & non si dee pensare, che il volto miracoloso della santissima Nunziata sia stato allora da sapere humano effigiato, quando della pittura era estinto ogni artifizio, ma dalla mano di DIO, et da virtù divina, si come di quello divinamente si provano ad hora, ad hora gli effetti."

28 Bocchi 1592, p. 25: "In un secolo adunque rozo quando era all'oscuro ogni artifizio della pittura, fu fatta questa opera così altamente, & fu con tanta virtù effigiato il volto della miracolosa Nunziata, che posiache à questo i più perfetti artifizij, & migliori, quando è l'arte homai venuta in colmo, non arrivano, bene di certo si puote affermare, come è opera questa non da senno humano, ma divino procedente."

29 Bocchi 1592, p. 25: "Ne si faccia in questo alcuno à credere, che il Buonarotto, o Andrea del Sarto, o Raffaello da Urbino di tutti i pittori piu nobili, & piu sovrani, siano arrivati à questo segno […], & ben sono lodate le altre opere, come cosa humana, ma à questo sublime honore, & à questa maestà non arrivano in modo alcuno."

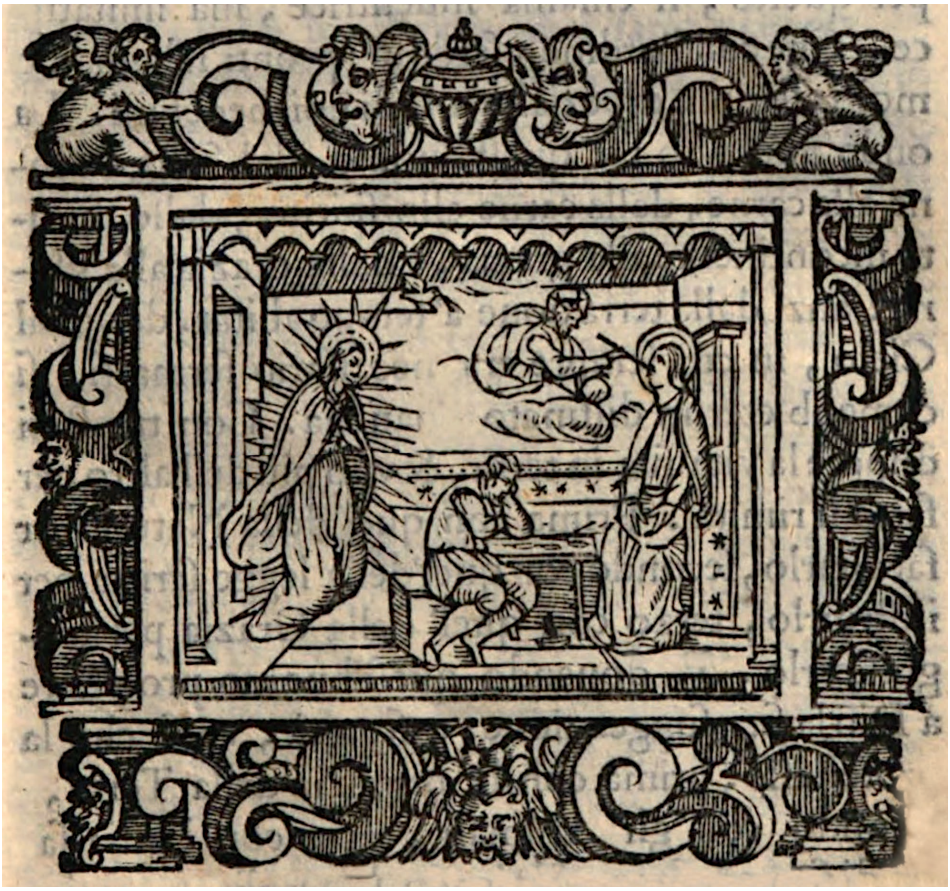

Figure 59 Unknown Artist, The Divine Hand paints the Face of the Virgin while the Painter sleeps, from the 1593 Edition of Luca Ferrini's *Corona di sessanta tre miracoli della Nunziata di Firenze*

Although Bocchi attributed the creation of the miraculous image to God, he discussed the influence of the artist as well. As a collaborative work, the painting of the Virgin mirrored the divine inspiration of the artist and was seen as a material reflection of his devout mind and life:

> "Ottimamente è conforme la pittura all'artefice, l'opera mirabile a' pensieri suoi santi, & quello, che si vede all'animo singulare, onde è nato sì pregiato lavoro. Egli si suol dire molto sovente, che ogni buon pittore è usato, quando dipigne, di dipignere sè stesso; cio è con artifizio effigiare quelle cose che a' costumi suoi molto e alla vita sono simiglianti. Perche pieno questo ottimo artefice di santi avvisi, tutta questa pittura, che da

> lui fu dipinta, ordinò con tanta grazia, che mirare non si puote senza dolcezza di divozione, ne senza horrore di riverenza. E se le azzioni, come da fonte, procedono dall'animo, come esser puote, che non somiglino quello, onde sono prodotte."[30]

By referring to the Florentine proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé stesso,* Bocchi stressed the (by now) topical motif of a similarity between the artist and his work. For Bocchi, this similarity consisted of the artist's individual character, his life, and the subjects of his paintings.[31] Despite the conservative and anti-individualistic nature of counter-reformatory art theory, this was a very modern approach to the interpretation of paintings. It suggested that all art is stimulated by an individual impetus. That is, the life of the artist provides the fertile humus for his work. Although Bocchi exemplified his theory with the legend of a Christian artist from the 13th century, the theory proved to be valid for contemporary artists as well. According to Bocchi, Raphael and Michelangelo painted themselves whenever they used a paintbrush:

> "Raffaello da Urbino, come era di volto, cosi fu egli di animo allegro: & gentile, & leggiadro ne' costumi fece tutte le sue pitture altresu accese di letizia: ne dipinse mai alcuna cosa, in cui con somma grazia non resti quasi egli stesso effigiato. […] Michelagnolo Buonarotti, colmo di profondo sapere, & di alto intelletto, amatore di vita solitaria, hora con colori, & hora col marmo effigiò sempre se stesso, cioè figure piene di nobil senno, & di gravità, […] non è egli nelle sue mirabili figure conforme, & simile oltra modo a suoi pensieri?"[32]

7.4 The Afterlife of *Ogni pittore dipinge sé*

In a certain sense, Bocchi's anonymous painter of the Annunciation thus became the prototype for the modern artist of the Italian Renaissance. Whereas the first half of the Cinquecento was still characterised by a critical approach to individual forms of expression, the figure of the *artefice cristiano* provided the cultural background for an unquestioned equation of artist and art towards the end of the century. Similarities between the life and work of an artist were no longer seen as a defective form of imitation, but understood as the positive expression

30 Bocchi 1592, p. 45.
31 For Bocchi's understanding of *costume,* a derivative of the Greek *ethos,* cfr. Barasch 1975, p. 419.
32 Bocchi 1592, pp. 45 f.

of his individual ideas and thoughts. It is almost an irony of history that an institution which aimed to regulate the arts proved to be the midwife of a new and autonomous type of artist. By promoting the idea of a close correlation of painting and painter as an all-pervasive imperative, the Counter-Reformation prepared the way for future generations of artists, who were eager to draw on these analogies. The subsequent increase in artistic freedom and the emergence of an art market gave rise to new forms of artistic self-fashioning, allowing painters to blend their art with their lives. Art theorists were only too happy to exploit such examples when writing their biographies – and sometimes they even inverted this process by creating artists in the image of their work.

A few passages from the 17th century might illustrate how the rhetorical figure of automimesis continued to make its appearance in art literature. Claudio Achillini, a teacher of Carlo Cesare Malvasia's, applied the topos to one of the most influential painters of his time, Guido Reni. Reni was famous for his faith in God and the beauty of his angelic figures. Intermingling body, soul, and creativity, Achillini states that Guido Reni paints angelic figures so well because he himself has angelic features.[33] Similarly, according to the *Vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni* (1672), a detailed description of the works and lives of the most influential painters of the Baroque period by the Roman artist and antiquarian Giovan Pietro Bellori, the painter Domenichino used to identify with the objects of his representations before depicting them: "A painter should feel and act like his figures to give them the right expression."[34] In a particularly vivid anecdote, Bellori recounts how Domenichino used to interact with the figures of his paintings by shouting and yelling at them.[35] The frequently voiced idea of the close

33 Manzini 1633, p. 55: "I pittori, per un' instinto di natura dissegnando, e colorendo figure, dissegnano e coloriscono, senza propria industria ò consiglio, sé medesimi, ò almeno figure in gran parte somiglianti a sé medesimi; [...]. Hor quale maraviglia sarà se Guido essendo un Angelo per le bellezze del Corpo, e dell'Anima, e dipingendo, dipinga figure Angeliche?" For this passage see also Sohm 2002, p. 462, n. 97.

34 Bellori 1672 (1976), p. 359: "[Domenico] Non poteva capire come certi conducono l'opere gravissime ciarlando in conversazione: il che è contrasegno di pratica, e non di applicazione d'intelletto; ed aggiungeva che nelle azzioni della pittura bisogna non solo contemplare e riconoscere gli affetti, ma sentirli ancora in se stesso, fare e patire le medesime cose che si rappresentano; onde alle volte udivasi ragionare da sé solo e mandar voci di duolo e d'allegrezza, secondo l'affezzioni espresse."

35 Bellori 1672 (1976), p. 359: "Et è memorabile quello gli incontrò col maestro nella sua giovinezza, quando, essendo andato Annibale a trovarlo a San Gregorio in tempo che dipingeva il Martirio di Santo Andrea, e trovando aperto, lo vide all'improviso adirato e minacciante con parole di sdegno; Annibale si ritirò indietro ed aspettò fintanto si accorse che Domenico intendeva a quel soldato che minaccia il Santo col dito; non poté ritenersi allora e si avvicinò ad abbracciarlo, dicendogli: 'Domenico, oggi da te imparo'."

connection between life and art was echoed by Bellori's younger contemporary, the Florentine art biographer Filippo Baldinucci. His *Notizie de' professori del disegno* employed the motif when describing the life of Caravaggio. Because he had a turbulent and contentious nature, his works are endowed with identical characteristics. By explicitly referring to the proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé,* Baldinucci states that Caravaggio's physiognomy, his rough table manners, and his violent comportment were in accordance with his naturalistic und unrefurbished paintings.[36] Similar references were made in the lives of Antonio Rossellino[37] and Gregorio Pagani.[38]

The topos even made its way into the art literature north of the Alps. Arnold Houbraken's *Groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*

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36 Baldinucci, *Notizie,* Ed. Ranalli, vol. 3, p. 960: "Perdonisi al Caravaggio questo suo modo d'usare il pennello; mentre egli volle avverare in se medesimo quel proverbio che dice, che ogni pittore dipigne se stesso, merce che se s'osserva il modo, che egli usò nel conversare, si trova tale, quale sopra accennammo; se ci voltiamo al portamento di sua persona lo veggiamo stravagante quanto altro mai, e poco e il dire, che egli volendo pascere sua burbanza, particolarmente dopo la conseguita dignita di cavaliere, vestivasi di nobile drapperia, ne mutavasela mai, sin tanto non se la vedeva cascare in terra a brano a brano, se l'osserveremo in quello, in che fino gl'istessi bruti pare che premano alquanto, che e il tener netto il proprio corpo, ed il nutrirsi, lo vedremo difettoso, trovandosi che egli nel primo fu negligentissimo, e nel secondo non meno." For the proverb in relation to the various biographies of Caravaggio see the excellent article by Sohm 2002.

37 Baldinucci 1681–1728 (1974–1975), vol. 1, pp. 410 f.: "E si vede ancora nella Pieve di Empoli in Toscana un San Bastiano di Marmo, bellissimo di porporzione, di mezzo naturale. Furono le opere di questo maestro lodate dal Buonarroto: e fino al presente son tenute in gran pregio: e Ciò non tanto per la vaghezza e grazia, che diede alle teste, ma per la delicatezza, con che si vede lavorato il marmo: per la morbidezza e leggiardia de' panni, e per ogni altro più bel precetto dell'arte statuaria, che si vede così bene osservato nell'opere sue, che veramente arrecano stupore: e se alcuna fede prestare si dovesse al proverbio volgare, cioè: che ogni Artefice se stesso ritrae, non saprei dire in chi più avverato egli si fosse, che nel Rossellino, il quale fu da natura dotato di un animo così ben composto, e all'eccellenza nell'arte sua ebbe aggiunte qualita di tanto singolari di modestia e di gentilezza, che fu da tutti, non che amato e riverito, in certo modo adorato."

38 Baldinucci 1681–1728 (1974–1975), vol. 3, pp. 54 f.: "Vollero però alcuni tacciarlo perchè egli si fosse preso per uso d'eleggere per le sue pitture arie di teste troppo piene di carne, e ne fu una volta avvisato: ma egli rispose quello che veramente fu, cioè, che il suo natural talento per altro il portava piuttosto al secco, che altrimenti, ed essendo d'abito di corpo molto estenuato, per non avverare in se medesimo il proverbio, che dice, che ogni Pittore dipinge se stesso, s'era gettato, ed attenuto con eccesso, anzi che no, alla parte dell'opere, e fatti di tal maestro; ed io non dubito punto d'accertare il mio Letore, ch'elle sono in ogni particulare più minuto degnissime d'ogni fede, perchè elle uscironi dalla bocca d'un uomo de' più ingenui, e sinceri, ch'io conoscessi mai […]."

(1718–1721) applied the motif to the lives of Adriaen Brouwer[39] and Jan Steen,[40] two Dutch artists who were known for their immoral lives and realistic genre paintings. In France, Claude-Henri Watelet's *L'art de peindre* (1761) expected the artists to embody the same passions as their figures;[41] in Switzerland, Johann Caspar Lavater repeatedly referred to the idea of the interdependence of artist and artwork.[42] The tendency of painters to imprint their own characteristics on their portraits was also noticed by individuals who, by profession, weren't constantly concerned with art theory. For example, Gabriele von Bülow, the daughter of Wilhelm von Humboldt, observed in 1828 how a portrait of her father echoed the physiognomy of the painter, Thomas Lawrence. While the upper half of the face was more faithful to Wilhelm von Humboldt, the lower half resembled Lawrence who, according to von Bülow, made all of his paintings look like himself.[43]

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39 Houbraken 1718–1721, vol. 1, p. 318: "Adriaan Brouwer zal ons gezegde als in een spiegel doen zien. Deze zyne genegenheid opvolgende, die tot boerterye helde, heeft niet anders beoogt als de zelve op het natuurlykst door 't penceel af te malen, ('t geen hem boven anderen gelukt is) en daar door den eernaam van een groot meester bekomen. Potsig was zyn penceelkonst, potsig zyn leven. Zoo de man was, was zyn werk."

40 Houbraken 1718–1721, vol. 3, p. 13: "In't algemeen moet ik zeggen, dat zyn schilderyen zyn als zyn levenswyze, en zyn levenswyze als zyne schilderyen." For this topos in the art theory of the Netherlands see Cartwright 2007.

41 Watelet 1761, p. 134: "Le caractere d'esprit de l'artiste influe beaucoup sur la partie de l'Expression. Ce caractere fait que les objets le frappent par certaines qualités de préférence à d'autres. L'habitude y contribue aussi. Il est donc essentiel que l'artiste s'accoutume, autant qu'il est possible, à être affecté préférablement des qualités distinctives qui tiennent plus essentiellement à la perfection des objets qu'il envisage relativement à son Art." For the art theory in France with particular regards to the expression of the passions see Kirchner 1991, pp. 239 ff.

42 Lavater 1775–1778, vol. 3, p. 192: "Ich habe schon gesagt: Die Werke der Künstler sind wie ihre Physiognomien. Ich wag' es, noch eine nähere Bestimmung beyzufügen. Die Umrisse ihrer Arbeiten sind gemeiniglich wie die Umrisse ihrer Gesichter; oder noch näher, wie die Umrisse ihrer Stirnen und Nasen – locker, wenn diese locker, und scharf, wenn diese scharf sind; bestimmt, wenn diese bestimmt, unbestimmt, wenn diese unbestimmt sind. Denn wie ihre Physiognomie ist, so ist ihr Gefühl, so ihre Liebe. Der hartgezeichnete liebt das hartgezeichnete; der weichumrissene die weichern Umrisse – warum? der hartgezeichnete hat mehr Sinn, Auge, Gefühl für das, was ihm ähnlich ist." Lavater 1775–1778, vol. 4, p. 435: "Jeder Maler malt mehr und minder sich selbst. Wie einer ist, so malt er auch. Jeder Christ hat so gewiß Züge von Christus, Mienen von Christus, so gewiß er vom Geiste Christus hat. Wer das bestreitet, hat gewiß wenig Menschen- und Christuskenntniß."

43 von Bülow 1895, p. 222: "Neulich haben wir auch des Vaters Portrait bei Lawrence gesehen, der Kopf ist soweit vollendet, und ist im Obertheil, Stirn, Augen, Nase ähnlich, aber im unteren Teil des Gesichts unähnlich geblieben, wie es war, gar zu rosig in der Farbe, und sieht nebenbei Lawrence selbst ähnlich, wie alle seine Bilder, finde ich." Discussed by Gombrich 1972, p. 40.

Towards the end of 19th century, when influential art treatises like Leonardo da Vinci's *Trattato* had been translated into English, and artists had gained considerable self-confidence, more authors, art theorists, and artists began to reflect upon artistic creativity by invoking the idea of involuntary self-portraiture. Dorothy Stanley, an English painter who became famous for her portraits of poor children in the streets of London in the Victorian era, describes how she struggled with their pictorial representations, which she often deemed unsatisfactory. In her book *London Street Arabs* (1890), a collection of her works with a short introductory essay on the art of painting street children, she recounts the difficulties of rendering authentic depictions of *raggamuffins* because of the tendency of artists to always put themselves into their work.[44] While Stanley grappled to suppress the individuality of the artist, her compatriot Aubrey Beardsley used it to his advantage. As a young artist during his education at Westminster Art School in 1892, he observed that many students would interpret the models before them according to their own individuality: stout men would draw stout figures and *vice versa.* This presumed correlation between the physical nature of an artist and his works came in handy when he was asked by his friend Aymer Vallance to paint a portrait of Sandro Botticelli. Since he considered the works of Botticelli to be a corporeal reflection of the physical likeness of the Renaissance painter, he was able to reconstruct his physiognomy from his works.[45] The resulting drawing from 1893, probably based on the study of a photographic reproduction of Botticelli's *Portrait of a young man with a medal* in the Uffizi, is today housed at the Harvard Art Collection (Fig. 60). Although it does not look like the self-portraits of Botticelli, which are known to us today, it features a distinct physiognomy which reminds us not only of the works of the Florentine artist but also of the prominent

44 Stanley 1890, p. 6: "How I wish I could draw them as I see them, as I feel them – but there is such a wide chasm between conceiving and carrying out. No ragamuffin is ever vulgar or common. If the pictures render him so, it is the artist's fault, since he always puts himself into his work. All his vulgarity and affectations go into the drawing, just as simplicity, dignity, and love of truth are to be found in the work if found in the artist."

45 Vallance 1898, p. 367: "I remember on one occasion he was telling me of his amusement in noting how the different students at Brown's school would always interpret the subject before them, each according to his own individuality: the stout men drew stout figures and *vice versa.* In fact, he remarked upon the universal tendency to reproduce one's own personal type, and that he supposed it had always been so. 'Not, surely, in the case of Botticelli?' I asked; and, on his replying in the affirmative, I suggested to reconstruct Botticelli's portrait from the materials supplied in his own works. This idea evidently attracted Beardsley, for, without saying any more, he went off, evolved a head of Botticelli on those lines, and, not long afterwards, came and presented it to me. Until now, the drawing has never left my hand nor been reproduced. It was executed in the spring or summer of 1893." Cfr. Owens 2015, p. 83.

cheekbones of Beardsley himself. Beardsley's and Stanley's observations are thus consistent with the ideas of one of the most influential art theorists of their time, Oscar Wilde. As we can read on the first pages of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), the poet and playwright was convinced of a mutual relationship between an artist and his work. The painter Basil Hallward, the principal figure of the literary masterpiece, cites the following words: "Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the colored canvas, reveals himself."[46] Another interesting example of automimesis, along the lines of Wilde, is provided by Oskar Kokoschka. When confronted with the particularly rigid physiognomy of one of his sitters, the Austrian painter assumed a similar expression which allowed him to capture the facial features of his subject more adequately. Kokoschka needed to have a similar muscular experience to understand the other person's face.[47]

The list of examples of automimesis in the art literature could easily be continued. They show that art theorists not only referred to the lives of the artists when interpreting their works, but that they also referred to their works when interpreting their lives. Artists also referred to the same interrelatedness of art and life when discussing artistic issues. The similarity and interchangeability of artist and art, first voiced through the Florentine proverb *Ogni pittore dipinge sé* at the end of the Quattrocento, thus provided the ideal background for a modern understanding of the autonomy of the arts, one in which the painter often figures as an independent and eccentric genius.

46 Wilde 1891, p. 12.
47 Gombrich 1972, p. 41.

Figure 60 Aubrey Beardsley, Portrait of Sandro Botticelli, 1893, Boston, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum