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## The »Motions of the Mind« in Renaissance Portraits: The Spiritual Dimension of Portraiture\*

Recent art history has come up with the term »motions of the mind« to denote how an individual portrait can convey the character and the mind of a person. For the most part, this notion is discussed in more general (if not vague) terms and also used to characterise the portraits painted by artists like Leonardo da Vinci, Antonello da Messina or Giorgione.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, attempts have been made to see the »motions of the mind« as part of a literary tradition<sup>2</sup> or in the context of an artist's aspirations to show off his particular mimetic talents.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this paper is to link the »motions of the mind« more precisely to possible functions of portraits in 15th- and early 16th-century art. For this reason I shall discuss both inscriptions and symbols in portraits and also literary sources about portraits explicitly dealing with the »motions of the mind«. To some

extent, this approach will include a discussion of metaphorical descriptions of the soul known from antiquity and adapted by Christian writers. Thus this article also deals with the Christian adoption of antique metaphor and its use in a new genre of Renaissance painting, the autonomous portrait.

The concept known today as »motions of the mind« in painting derives from a literary topos going back to antiquity. The Elder Pliny, for example, writes about the painter Aristides of Thebes who was the first to express (primus expressit)<sup>4</sup> the mentality (animus), sentiments (sensus), character (éthe) and passions (perturbationes) of a person. Xenophon<sup>5</sup> and Philostratus<sup>6</sup> are similarly optimistic as to the ability of art to be thus articulate. Succeeding those authors, medieval writers like Pietro d'Abano<sup>7</sup> and hu-

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Wilhelm Waetzold, *Die Kunst des Porträts*, Leipzig 1908, 24–25 and 31–69; John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance*, London/New York 1966, 101–154; Giuseppe de Logu and Guido Marinelli, *Il ritratto nella pittura italiana*, 2 vols., Bergamo 1975, I, 11–14; Roy McMullen, *Mona Lisa. The Picture and the Myth*, London 1975, 69–72; Gottfried Boehm, *Bildnis und Individuum. Über den Ursprung der Porträtmalerei in der italienischen Renaissance*, Munich 1985, 19, 156–157, 220 (»Seelenhaftigkeit«); Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, New Haven/London 1989, 191; David A. Brown, Leonardo and the Ladies with the Ermine and the Book, in: *Artibus et Historiae* 11, 1990 (22), 47–61, here 50; Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits. European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries*, New Haven/London 1990,

27; Harry Berger, Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture, in: *Representations* 46, 1994, 87–120, here 87–88; Paola Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art. Gender, Representation, Identity*, Manchester 1997, 88–89.

<sup>2</sup> John Shearman, *Only Connect... Art and the Spectator in Italian Renaissance*, Princeton 1992, 112–124.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Zöllner, Leonardo's Portrait of Mona Lisa del Giocondo, in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 121, 1993, 115–138, here 127–129; idem, *Leonardo da Vinci. Mona Lisa. Das Porträt der Lisa del Giocondo. Legende und Geschichte*, Frankfurt 1994, 65–70.

<sup>4</sup> Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, 35.98 (see similarly 35.58; 35.67; 35.88; 35.128). For the following see also Philipp Fehl, On Representation of Character in Renaissance Sculpture, in: *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31, 1973, 291–307, and, more generally, Jennifer Montagu, Traditions of Expression, in: *Rings. Five Passions of World Art*, ed. J. Carter Brown and Michael Schapiro, New York 1996, 24–39.

<sup>5</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3.10. – See also Rudolf Preimesberger, Xenophon: Seelenmalerei bei Sokrates, in: Rudolf Preimesberger, Hannah Baader und Nicola Suthor (ed.), *Porträt*, Berlin 1999, 80–90.

<sup>6</sup> Philostratos, *Eikones*, 390K–391.

<sup>7</sup> Pietro d'Abano, *Liber compilationis physiognomiae*, Padua 1474; Johannes Thomann, Pietro d'Abano on



1. Albrecht Dürer, *Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1526, engraving, 249 × 190 mm. Private collection

manists of the 15th century like Bartolommeo Fazio, for example, evoked the possibilities of the fine arts to manifest the character and tran-

sient emotional states in a picture.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci provide some remarks about painting's ability to show a person's mind – though neither speaks directly about portraits as an autonomous genre.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to such general and optimistic statements, there is another widespread literary topos which discloses substantial doubts about the mimetic abilities of the fine arts in the realm of mentality and which, in fact, bears witness to a long lasting antagonism between the inferior image of the body (eventually created by art) and the better image of the mind (produced by literature, poetry and philosophy).<sup>10</sup> Corresponding remarks are known from Cicero, Ovid, Tacitus, the epigrams of Martial (see below) and from the *Anthologia Graeca*.<sup>11</sup> In the 15th century, Marsilio Ficino voices similar opinions, judging the material representation of the essentially immaterial soul to be impossible.<sup>12</sup> Soon afterwards, Gerolamo Savonarola asserts that in a painting the spiritual beauty of the soul cannot be recognised in the mere bodily beauty of the countenance.<sup>13</sup>

Naturally, doubts about the possibilities of depicting moral behaviour and the soul in a work of art are strongest in portraits of scholars and humanists, for example in such portraits by Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach<sup>14</sup> or, later in the 16th century, by Hendrick Goltzius.<sup>15</sup> For example, on Albrecht Dürer's portrait of Erasmus of

Giotto, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 54, 1991, 238–244.

8 Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators. Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition 1350–1450*, Oxford 1971, 100–104, 163–165.

9 Leon Battista Alberti, *De statua. De pictura. Elementa picturae*, ed. Oskar Bätschmann und Christoph Schaublin, Darmstadt 2000, *De pictura*, 268–281, § 41–45 (same numbering as in Cecil Grayson's edition of 1972), and 330 (commentary); Jean Paul Richter (ed.), *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, 2 vols., Oxford 1970, § 584, 594; Leonardo da Vinci, *Libro di pittura*, ed. Carlo Pedretti and Carlo Vecce, 2 vols., Florence 1995, § 20, 180, 189, 367 (same numbering as in Heinrich Ludwig's edition of 1882). For a further discussion see Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci. The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man*, London 1981, 190–191.

10 Walter Ludwig, *Das bessere Bildnis des Gelehrten*, in: *Philologus* 142, 1998, 123–161.

11 Cicero, *Pro A. Licinio Archia poeta oratio*, 6.14, 12.30; Ovid, *Tristia*, 1.7.11–14; Tacitus, *Agricola*, 46, ed. Hutton, 114/115; *Greek Anthology*, 9.687; 11.412; Shearman (as note 2), 114; Ludwig (as note 10).

12 Marsilio Ficino, *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis de amore*, 5.3 (edition consulted: Marsilio Ficino, *Über die Liebe oder Platons Gastmahl – Commentarium in convivium Platonis de amore*, Hamburg 1984, 138f.).

13 Gerolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Ezechiele*, ed. Ridolfi, 2 vols., Rome 1955, (28th February 1497), 370–386, 375, no. 28.

14 Martin Warnke, *Cranachs Luther. Entwürfe für ein Image*, Frankfurt 1985, 36, 41; Ludwig (as note 10), 134–135. – More generally on inscriptions in portraits see Jodi Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture in the Italian Renaissance*, Cambridge 2000, 21–45.

Rotterdam from 1526 (fig. 1) a Latin inscription initially says: »IMAGO.ERASMI.ROTERODA / MI.AB.ALBERTO.DVRERO.AD / VIVAM.EFFI- / GIEM.DELINIATA.« (»The image of Erasmus of Rotterdam, drawn after the living likeness by Albrecht Dürer.«)

In a further line, however, the inscription raises doubts about the expressional properties of the fine arts with the following words (in Greek): »the better image is given by his writings«. <sup>16</sup> The concept is more explicit still in Dürer's portrait engraving of Philipp Melanchthon (fig. 2) whose inscription reads: »VIVENTIS.POTVIT.DVRERIVS.ORA.PHILIPPI / MENTEM.NON.POTVIT. / PINGERE.DOCTA / MANVS« (»Dürer could draw the features of Philippus lifelike, but the learned hand (could) not (draw) his spirit«). <sup>17</sup>

These hints at the limitations of artistic performance directly follow an epigrammatic tradition of antiquity and express the humanist set of belief which favours the mind and the power of the word to the potentials of images. There are similar implications advocating the dominance of the word on an engraving with the image of Willibald Pirckheimer, executed in 1524 (fig. 3), where the inscription reads: »VIVITVR.INGE- / NIO.CAETERA.MORTIS. / .ERVNT.« (»We live through the spirit, all else will die«). <sup>18</sup>

More explicit than in both Erasmus's and Melanchthon's portraits, the inscription here



2. Albrecht Dürer, *Portrait of Philipp Melanchthon*, 1526, engraving, 174 × 129 mm. Private collection

makes the point that, after all, only Pirckheimer's »ingenium« and therefore the superior image of the mind ensures his spiritual survival after

15 *Die Masken der Schönheit. Hendrick Goltzius und das Kunstideal um 1600*, ex.-cat., Hamburg 2002, 25–26, 36–37.

16 Albrecht Dürer, *Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1526, engraving, 249 × 190 mm. – Albrecht Dürer. *Das druckgraphische Werk I. Kupferstiche, Eisenradierungen und Kaltnadelblätter*. Bearbeitet von Rainer Schoch, Matthias Mende und Anna Scherbaum, Munich 2001, no. 102; Philipp Fehl, Dürer's »Portrait of Erasmus« and the Medal by Quentin Massys: Two Types of Mimesis, in: *Künstlerischer Austausch. Artistic Exchange. Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin 15–20 July 1992, 3 vols., Berlin 1993, II, 453–472. – For either Joachim Camerarius or Eobanus Hesse as authors of this epigram see Ludwig (as note 10), 138; for the translation *idem*, 136. – See also Rudolf Preimesberger, Albrecht Dürer: *Imago und effigies* (1526), in: Preimesberger/Baader/Suthor (as note 5), 228–237.

17 Albrecht Dürer, *Portrait of Philipp Melanchthon*, 1526, engraving, 174 × 129 mm. – Albrecht Dürer. *Das druckgraphische Werk I* (as note 16), no. 101. – For precepts of this distichon in Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.831f, and the *Anthologia Graeca* (Pl 2.19.1.1./ A.P. 11.213.1) see Ludwig (as note 10), 136–137. – See also Rudolf Preimesberger, Albrecht Dürer: *Das Dilemma des Porträts, epigrammatisch* (1526), in: Preimesberger/Baader/Suthor (as note 5), 220–227.

18 Albrecht Dürer, *Portrait of Willibald Pirckheimer*, 1524, engraving, 181 × 115 mm. – Albrecht Dürer. *Das druckgraphische Werk I* (as note 16), no. 99; »Vivitur ingenio« is taken from the so called »Appendix Virgiliana«, a collection of antique texts of which a copy was kept in the Pirckheimer family library (now London British Library, »Codex Arundel« 133, fol. 96, »Elegia in mecenatem«, v. 38); see Dieter Wuttke, *Portrait des Willibald Pirckheimer*, in: *Caritas Pirckheimer 1467–1532. Eine Ausstellung der katholischen*



3. Albrecht Dürer, *Portrait of Willibald Pirckheimer*, 1524, engraving, 181 × 115 mm. Private collection

death. This idea of commemoration after death finds a parallel in the inscription's tablet which is formally inspired by antique Roman provincial tombstones known to Dürer through a visit in Augsburg.<sup>19</sup>

Outside the genre of humanist portraits, the topos of the limited powers of artistic mimesis and the antagonism between the image of the body and the image of the mind can be found occasionally as well, as for example in Domenico Ghirlandaio's portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi,<sup>20</sup> deceased wife of Lorenzo Tornabuoni (fig. 4). As Susanne Kress has made plausible, the picture was originally executed in 1486 as a wedding or betrothal portrait,<sup>21</sup> since, as was customary for this type of imagery,<sup>22</sup> allusions to the bridegroom adorn the bride's dress, in this case the »L« for Giovanna's husband Lorenzo Tornabuoni, and the diamond as heraldic symbol of his family. Only later, after Giovanna's death on 7 October 1488, the picture became a posthumous portrait by adding the »cartellino« with an epigrammatic inscription in the background. This inscription has its origins in an epigram by Martial and utters doubts about the possibilities of art to depict the soul and the morals of a person. The lines from Martial, slightly altered on Ghirlandaio's portrait, read: »ARS VTINAM MORES/ ANIMVMQVE EFFINGERE POSSES/ PVLCHROR IN TERRIS NVLLA TABVLA FORET« (»Art, would that you could represent character and mind!/ There would be no more beautiful painting on earth«).<sup>23</sup>

Stadtkirche Nürnberg. Kaiserburg, Nürnberg 1982, Munich 1982, no. 33, 57–58.

19 Albrecht Dürer. *Das druckgraphische Werk I* (as note 16), 236–237.

20 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi*, 1486/1488, tempera on panel, 77 × 49 cm, Madrid, Collection Thyssen-Bornemisza. – Ulrich Thieme, Ein Porträt der Giovanna Tornabuoni von Domenico Ghirlandaio, in: *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, N.F., 9, 1898, 192–200; Shearman (as note 2), 109–113; Jean K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio. Artist and Artisan*, New Haven/London 2000, no. 46, and 174–175.

21 Susanne Kress, *Das autonome Porträt in Florenz*, Ph.D. thesis, Gießen 1995, chapter 7.2.

22 Patricia Simons, *Women in Frames. The Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture*, in: *His-*

*tory Workshop Journal* 25, 1988, 4–30, 13 (reprinted in: Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (ed.), *The Expanding Discourse. Feminism and Art History*, New York 1992, 39–57); Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1430–1520, in: *Virtue and Beauty*, ex.-cat. ed. David A. Brown, Washington 2001, 63–87, here 67–74.

23 English translation from Shearman (as note 2), 112 (who also has pointed out to me that one ought to consult the old editions of Martial). – The grammatical shift in the epigram of Ghirlandaio's painting (»posses« instead of »posset«) follows the widely used standard edition of Martial with a commentary by Domizio Calderini (1446–1478), published in 1474 and again in 1482 and 1483, dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici, Lorenzo Tornabuoni's cousin: »De imagine. M. Antonii / Haec mihi qui colitur uiolis

The memorial function of the portrait, already mentioned above, becomes more evident in Martial's complete epigram, number 10.32 in modern editions, which reads: »Haec mihi quae colitur violis pictura rosisque,/ quos referat voltus Caediciane, rogas?/ talis erat Marcus mediis Antonius annis/ Primus: in hoc iuvenem se videt ore senex./ Ars utinam mores animumque effingere posset!/ pulchrior in terris nulla tabella foret.« (»This picture which is honoured by me with violets and roses – ask you, Caedicanus, whose features it presents? Such was Marcus Antonius Primus in manhood's years: in this face the old man sees himself in youth. Would that art could limn his character and mind! More beautiful in all the world would no painting be!«).<sup>24</sup>

Martial was widely read in the 15th century and he was highly influential for both neo-Latin and vernacular poetry. Practically every humanist owned a manuscript copy of the epigrams before the publication of its ›editio princeps‹ in 1471.<sup>25</sup> We can, therefore, assume that a learned beholder of Ghirlandaio's painting – such as for example Lorenzo Tornabuoni (see below) – would have been able to supplement the missing lines from Martial's original text. In fact, as John Shearman has shown, the inscription on Ghirlandaio's painting follows a well known literary convention of iconic epigrams, as is verified in the *Anthologia Graeca* and other sources such as Martial's epigrams.<sup>26</sup> One possible meaning of the painting's recursion to a literary topos cer-



4. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi*, 1486/1488, tempera on panel, 77 × 49 cm. Madrid, Collection Thyssen-Bornemisza

pictura rosisque / Quos referat uultus ceciliane rogas. / Talis erit marcus mediis antonius annis: / Primus in hoc iuvene[m] se uidet ore senex. / Ars utinam mores: animu[m]que effingere posses: / Pulchrior i[n] terris nulla tabella foret.« *Domiti Calderini Veronensis Commentarii in Valerium Martialem*, Milan 1483, c. riii-v. The different readings in all extant manuscripts and incunabula are conveniently described in *M. Val. Martialis Epigrammaton Libri edidit D. F. G. Scheidewin*, 2 vols., Grimma 1842, XIII–CXXXII, and *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammata edidit D. R. Shackleton Bailley*, Stuttgart, 1990, IV. Interestingly, however, the manuscript copy owned by Angelo Poliziano (who wrote the epitaphion for Giovanna Tornabuoni's tomb) seems to have had »posset« (see Wallace Martin Lindsay, *Ancient Editions of Martial*, Oxford 1903).

24 Martial, *Epigrams, with an English translation by C. A. Ker*, 2 vols., London/Cambridge (Mass.) 1968, II, 176–179 (X.32).

25 For Martial's enormous success in 15th-Century Italy see Frank-Rutger Hausmann, *Marcus Valerius Martialis*, in: *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum. Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries*, IV, Washington 1980, 249–296; John Patrick Sullivan, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic. A Literary and Historical Study*, Cambridge (Mass.) etc. 1991, 262–267.

26 Shearman (as note 2), 114. – For Martial see above, for the knowledge of the *Anthologia Graeca* (first edition 1494) in Florence from c. 1472 onwards see James Hutton, *The Greek Anthology in Italy to the Year 1800*, Ithaca/New York 1935, 35–37, and *passim*.

tainly is to emphasise the virtue of the depicted person and also to hint at the skill of the painter and his ability to defeat the limits of painting.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the inscription is to underline the memorial function of the portrait, for Martial in the epigram in question, speaks of Marcus Antonius Primus, who looks back at the portrait of his younger self and on a fulfilled life, and therefore does not fear death.

This idea also becomes clear in another of Martial's epigrams, number 10.23 in modern editions, also on Marcus Antonius Primus, who in his 75th year looks back on a life spent well: »Now in his placid age happy Antonius Primus reckons fifteen Olympiads gone, and he looks back on past days and the vista of his years, and fears not Lethe's wave now drawing nigh. No day, as he reviews it, is unwelcome and distressing to him, none has there been he would not wish to recall. A good man widens for himself his age's span; he lives twice who can find delight in life bygone«.<sup>28</sup>

One of the underlying ideas of Martial's two epigrams is, that, if life is spent well and virtuously, a person's mind lives on even after death. Thus also the portrait with its direct and indirect references to iconic epigrams addresses the issue of a person's mental afterlife. This ideal concept, based on the knowledge of a literary tradition, nicely fits the original setting of the portrait in the Tornabuoni palace, where it still hung after

Giovanna's death.<sup>29</sup> But the concept of the portrait with its reference to literary tradition also fits the intellectual level of both Giovanna and her husband: He was educated by Angelo Poliziano and is known to have studied Homer already at the tender age of 16.<sup>30</sup> A high level of learning of Lorenzo and Giovanna can also be deduced from the erudite nature of their nuptial chamber decorated with the story of Jason and Medea<sup>31</sup> and from the sophisticated character of Sandro Botticelli's frescoes for Lorenzo Tornabuoni from the Villa Lemmi near Florence, now in the Musée du Louvre in Paris.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, a number of other 15th-century portraits, whose subject matter is the artistic depiction of the soul, display a comparable attachment to the survival of virtue after death and thus to a particular function of portraiture in general. One example, which postulates an optimistic view on the possibilities of portraying the soul of a person in a picture, can be found in the panegyric literature of the 15th century, that is in those largely flattering texts of courtly literati who sang praises to the glory and virtue of their sovereigns. In 1465/66 or more likely in about 1474,<sup>33</sup> the Carmelite Giovanni Antonio Ferabos (or Ferabò) conceived a poem whose subject matter is a portrait of Federigo da Montefeltre by Piero della Francesca. Probably, Ferabos' poem refers to Federigo's portrait<sup>34</sup> in the Uffizi, also by Piero della Francesca, possibly painted in

27 Charles M. Rosenberg, *Virtue, Piety and Affection: Some Portraits by Domenico Ghirlandaio*, in: *Il ritratto e la memoria. Materiali 2. A cura di Augusto Gentili, Philippe Morel, Claudia Cieri Via*, Florence 1993, 173–195, here 187–188; Josef Schmid, »et pro remedio animae et pro memoria«. *Bürgerliche »repraesentatio« in der Cappella Tornabuoni in S. Maria Novella*, Munich/Berlin 2002, 126.

28 »Iam numerat placido felix Antonius aevo / quindecies actas Primus Olympiadas / praeteritosque dies et totos respicit annos / nec metuit Lethes iam proprioris aquas. / nulla recordanti lux est ingrata gravisque; / nulla fuit cuius non meminisse velit. / ampliatur aetatis spatium sibi vir bonus / vivere bis, vita posse priore frui.« Martial, *Epigrams* (as note 24), 170f. (X.23). See also the text in *Domiti Calderini Veronensis Commentarii* (as note 23), c. riii-v.

29 John Kent Lydecker, *The Domestic Setting of the Arts in Renaissance Florence*, Ann Arbor 1987, 63, n. 84.

30 See Angelo Poliziano, *Sylvae*, 3 (*Ambra*), Poliziano's dedication to Lorenzo Tornabuoni (Angelo Poliziano, *Sylvae*, ed. Francesco Bausi, Florence 1996, 101); see also Herbert Horne, *Alessandro Filipepi Commonly Called Sandro Botticelli. Painter of Florence*, London 1908, 143–144.

31 Anne Brickey Barriault, »Spalliera« *Paintings of Renaissance Tuscany. Fables of Poets for Patrician Homes*, University Park (PA) 1994, 113–116, 144–145.

32 Horne (as note 30), 144–148; Ronald Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli. Life and Work*, 2 vols., London 1978, I, 96, II, 60–63. In my view, the frescoes were commissioned by Lorenzo Tornabuoni after Giovanna's death; see Frank Zöllner, *Botticelli. Images of Love and Spring*, Munich 1998, 101–112.



5. Piero della Francesca, *Portrait of Battista Sforza*, c. 1474, tempera on panel, 47 × 33 cm. Florence, Uffizi



6. Piero della Francesca, *Portrait of Federigo da Montefeltre*, c. 1474, tempera on panel, 47 × 33 cm. Florence, Uffizi

around 1474 (fig. 6).<sup>35</sup> The picture is complemented by a portrait of the duke's wife, Battista Sforza, who died in 1472 (fig. 5).<sup>36</sup> The portraits,

their inscriptions and Ferabos' poem (whether related to the Uffizi portrait or not) make some interesting points about the depiction of the soul.

33 Adolfo Cinquini, Piero della Francesca a Urbino e i ritratti degli Uffizi, in: *L'arte* 9, 1906, 56; Pope-Hennessy (as note 1), 319; for a possible date of the poem after 1472 (Battista's death) see Eugenio Battisti, *Piero della Francesca*, 2 vols., Milan 1971, II, 56–58, and Creighton Gilbert, *Change in Piero della Francesca*, New York 1968, 29–32 and 97–102. – For further references see Andreas Beyer, *Das Porträt in der Malerei*, Munich 2002, 78–82.

34 This is a matter of debate. Ronald Lightbown, *Piero della Francesca*, London etc. 1992, 229–243, here 230, and Joanna Woods-Marsden, »Ritratto al Naturale«: questions of realism and idealism in early Renaissance portraits, in: *Art Journal* 46/2, 1987, 209–216, here 215, for example, argue against the portrait's connection to Ferabos' poem.

35 Piero della Francesca, *Portrait of Federigo da Monte-*

*feltre*, c. 1474, tempera on panel, 47 × 33 cm, Florence, Uffizi. – See Battisti (as note 33), I, 355–371, II, 58, and Annegret Dülberg, *Privatporträts. Geschichte und Ikonologie einer Gattung im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1990, 75, who assume a date after August 1474, when Federigo had been granted the title of a Duke; see also Martin Warnke, Individuality as Argument. Piero della Francesca's Portrait of the Duke and the Duchess of Urbino, in: *The Image of the Individual. Portraits in the Renaissance*, ed. Nicholas Mann and Luke Syson, London 1998, 81–90, 213–215, here 87.

36 Piero della Francesca, *Portrait of Battista Sforza*, c. 1474, tempera on panel, 47 × 33 cm, Florence, Uffizi. The function of the portrait is analysed most recently by Dülberg (as note 35), 75–76, 126–127, 134, 139, 235–236, and Warnke (as note 35).

In his poem, Ferabos makes the picture speak to the depicted duke. After the usual comparison between Piero della Francesca and various antique artists, Ferabos identifies the person who has breathed soul into the picture. The end of the said Latin poem reads in John Pope-Hennessy's translation: »Piero has given me nerves and flesh and bone,/ But thou, Prince, has supplied me with a soul from thy divinity./ Therefore, I live, speak and have movement of myself./ Thus does the glory of the King transcend the glory of the artist.«<sup>37</sup>

Thus, in the panegyric discourse of the poet, the soul is represented in the picture – though accomplished not through the artist's skill but through that divinity of Federigo's which has slipped into the picture and is apparently an intrinsic part of his claim to sovereignty.

As one would expect, this claim to sovereignty results from Federigo's virtues, that are represented as personifications on the back of the portrait sitting on a triumphal vehicle with their glory explicitly imparted on an inscription relating to the legitimacy of his rulership (fig. 7): »CLARVS INSIGNI VEHITVR TRIVMPHO./ QVEM PAREM SVM MIS DVCIBVS PERHENNIS./ FAMA VIRTVTVM CELEBRAT DECENTER./ SCEPTRA TENENTEM.« (»Famous he rides in glorious triumph, which perennial fame of virtues seemly celebrates him [Federigo] as equal to the highest princes while holding his sceptre.«)

The virtues are also the subject on the back of Battista Sforza's portrait (fig. 8). In essence, the viewer is told that a wife is capable of giving her husband moderation (MODVS) and that she adorns his glorious deeds. Even more important than this (admittedly not very subtle) hint at the function of the duchess is the choice of words in the four lines on the back of her portrait: »QVE MODVM REBVS TENVIT SECVNDIS./ CONIV-

37 »Ast Petrus nervos mihi dat cum carnibus ossa, / Das animam, Princeps, tu deitate tua; / Vivo igitur, loquor et scio per me posse moviri; / Gloria sic Regis praestat et artificis.« English translation from Pope-Hennessy (as note 1), 319. – For a different translation see Woods-Marsden (as note 34), 211.

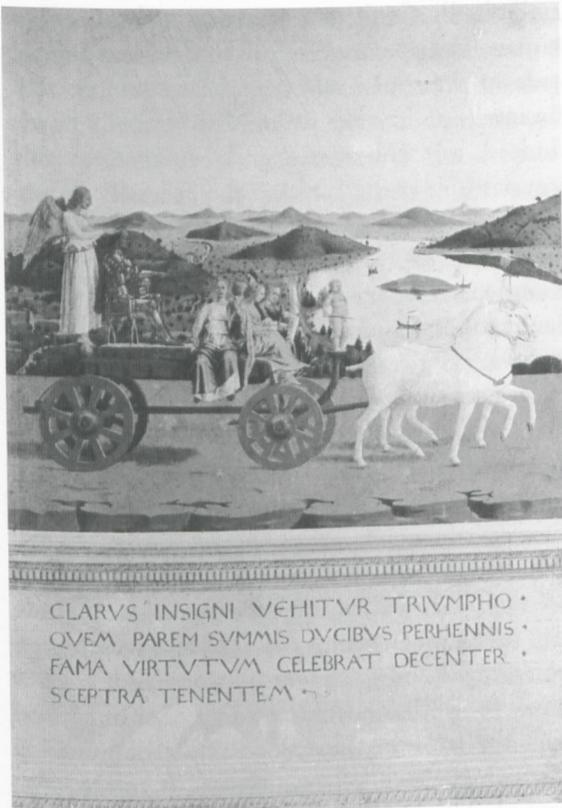
GIS MAGNI DECORATA RERVVM./ LAVDE GESTARVM VOLITAT PER ORA./ CVNCTA VIORVM.« (»She, who retained modesty in good fortune, adorned with the fame of her magnificent husband's deeds, now flies through all the mouths of men.«)

As becomes clear from the particular wording in lines two, three and four, the text of the inscription alludes partly to a passage of an epigram of Ennius, known through Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, and dealing with the question of how a person is best being honoured after death, that is not with tears but with fame »flying through all the mouths of men«: »Wouldn't they [poets] not want to be honoured after death? Why else those words:/ »Behold, my fellow-countrymen, old Ennius' portrait! He told the glorious story of your fathers' mighty race.«/ He demands the recompense of fame from those whose fathers he had rendered famous, and the same poet writes:/ »Let no one honour me with tears or on my ashes weep./ And why? I fly through the mouths of the living«.<sup>38</sup>

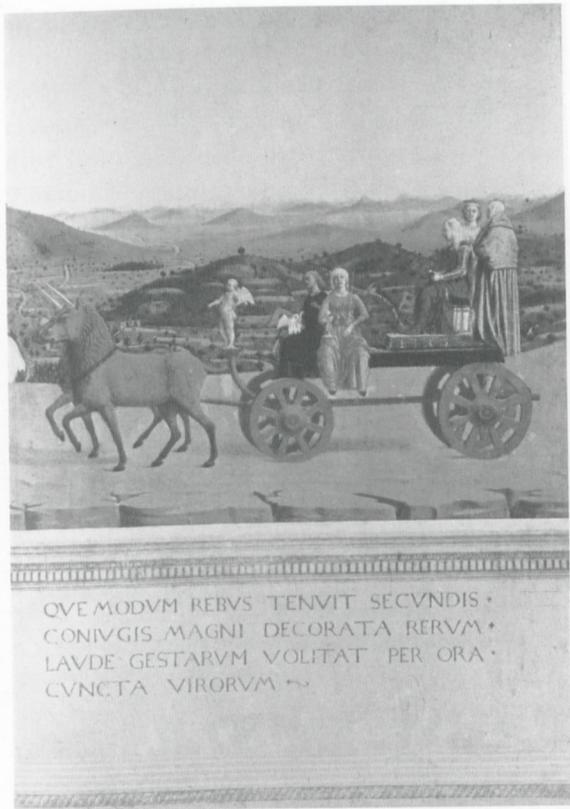
The idea of the interplay between the inscription on Battista's portrait and Cicero's text clearly is that Battista was well prepared for death because of her fame acquired through virtue. This is also emphasised by an implicit reference of the portrait's inscription to Vergil's *Aeneid*, where the poet speaks of man's not knowing his future fate and the idea of modesty in good fortune. Vergil quotes as his example the victorious king Turnus, who rather immodestly is not aware of fortune's unpredictable ways: »Now Turnus exalts in the spoil, and glories in the winning. O mind of man, knowing not fate or coming doom or how to keep bounds when uplifted with favouring fortune!«<sup>39</sup>

If we turn again back to Battista's portrait we can conclude that its epigram alludes to the in-

38 »Nonne post mortem nobilitari volunt? Unde ergo illud? / »Aspicite, o cives, senis Enni imaginis formam: / Hic vestrum panxit maxuma facta patrum.« / Mercedem gloriae flagitat ab iis, quorum patres adfecerat gloria, idemque: / »Nemo me lacrimis decoret nec funera fletu / Faxit. Cur? volito vivus per ora



7. Piero della Francesca, back of no. 6



8. Piero della Francesca, back of no. 5

ability of the ›mens hominum‹ to envisage its own future, and the portrait therefore advises virtuous moderation even in times of happiness. Only then death can be calmly faced, when one has found virtuous moderation in life. Thus in Piero's portrait of Battista Sforza we find an idea similar to the one expressed by Martial and by Ghirlandaio's portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi. The most important subject of the portraits, therefore, are the virtues, rendered visible through inscriptions and personifications. They are immediately attached to a person's qualities of character, and hence to their soul. For exactly

this reason, in Ferabos' panegyric, the animism of the portrait had to be linked as closely as possible to Federigo himself. It would have been hardly possible in a ›panegyric‹ sense to put a stronger emphasis on the artistic part of the expression of the soul, because in that case the artist would have had an intermediate part in those qualities of character of the sovereign which formed the basis for his rulership (Never let your soul fall into an artist's hand!).

A comparable limitation of an artist's direct control over a sovereign's soul in a portrait is known from a poem about a Leonardo da Vinci

vivum.« Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 1.(15)34. Translation – slightly altered – after Cicero, *Tusculan disputations with an English translation* by J. E. King, London/Cambridge (Mass.) 1966, 40–41. For this and the following see Gilbert (as note 33), 101.

39 »Quo nunc Turnus ovat spolio gaudetque potitus. /

nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae / et servare modum, rebus sublata secundis!« Vergil, *Aeneid*, 10.500–503. Translation from Vergil, *Aeneid*, translated by Henry Rushton Fairclough, 2 vols., London/Cambridge (Mass.) 1966, here II, 204/205.

painting. Between 1495 and 1499, a poet at the Milan court, possibly Antonio Tebaldeo, writes three Latin epigrams about Leonardo's portrait of Duke Ludovico Sforza's mistress Lucrezia Crivelli. The portrait is probably identical with the so-called *Belle Ferronière* in the Louvre.<sup>40</sup> One of these epigrams can be translated as follows: »How well learned art responds to nature:/ Vincius might have shown the soul here,/ As he has portrayed everything else./ He did not, so that the image might have greater truth:/ For it is thus: The soul is owned by Morus, her lover.«<sup>41</sup>

More explicitly than Ferabos, the poet here emphasises the fact that the soul can actually be represented in a painting, although at the same time he underlines that it is, after all, the property of the patron and sovereign – in this case Ludovico il Moro, Duke of Milan.

In both cases mentioned above, the soul has a jealously preserved and distinctive status, for the poets hesitate to yield the soul of the sovereign or his mistress to the mimetic-artistic realm of the artist. The poets thus state a certain reluctance concerning the potential of rendering spiritual and temperamental qualities. This scepticism of the poets may be understood to mean that the portrayal of the soul was an awkward matter even on the rather harmless level of panegyric. The artificial and eventually mechanical image of the core of a human being probably had to be understood as a special access to the person portrayed. Federigo da Montefeltre may have felt this about his image as much as Ludovico il Moro felt it about the portrait of his mistress, about whose body and soul he was wont to rule

unlimitedly, firstly as a sovereign and secondly as a man. The poems therefore suggest that a depiction of the soul could have been understood as an intrusion into the realm of sovereignly power. Indeed, not only the slightly exaggerated panegyrics hint at the fact that the necessity to limit the artists' representational powers has at times been clearly recognised. In 1504 Pomponius Gauricus, for example, describes the effect of »animation« or animism (»animacio«) in a piece of art: the animism or »animation« of a portrait may have enormous power and therefore Alexander the Great forbade all artists, except Lysippus, to portray him.<sup>42</sup>

For the time being, we can summarise that the literary statements about the artistic representation of the soul were more or less closely linked to certain functions of the respective pictures, e.g. to the memorial of the dead and of dear person's virtue and to honour persons both dead or alive. It also has become evident, that in addressing the issue of the »motions of the mind«, a fairly high level of erudition is involved. The same holds true for portraits in which the soul actually is represented through emblems, signs and symbols. I will now come to these portraits.

An illuminating example for the expression of the soul with the help of signs and symbolic devices is Pisanello's profile portrait of a young lady, probably showing either Ginevra d'Este or Margherita Gonzaga (fig. 9).<sup>43</sup> The painting, which was presumably executed in around 1440 after the death of the sitter (either Ginevra or Margherita), displays numerous ornaments like flowers in the background, roses, columbines

40 Leonardo da Vinci, *La Belle Ferronière*, c. 1490–1495, oil on wood, 63 × 45 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre. – Frank Zöllner, *Leonardo 1452–1519. Complete Paintings and Drawings*, Cologne 2003, cat.-no. XIII.

41 »Ut bene respondet Naturae ars docta! dedisset / Vincius, ut tribuit cetera sic animam / Noluit ut similis magis haec foret: altera sic est: / Possidet illius Maurus amans animam.« Edoardo Villata, *Leonardo da Vinci. I documenti e le testimonianze contemporanee*, Milan 1999, no. 122 (CA 167v-c [456v]); Jean Paul Richter (ed.), *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, § 1560. English translation from Martin Kemp,

*Leonardo da Vinci. The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man*, London 1981, 199.

42 Pomponius Gauricus, *De sculptura* (1504), ed. André Chastel and Robert Klein, Genève 1969, 204–205.

43 Pisanello, *Portrait of a Young Lady* (Ginevra d'Este?), c. 1440, tempera on panel, 42 × 29,6 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre. – Pope-Hennessy (as note 1), 217; Campbell (as note 1), 81–82; Bernard Degenhart, Annegrit Schmitt et. al., *Pisanello und Bono da Ferrara*, Munich 1995, 226–227; Dominique Cordellier, *La princesse au brin de genévrier*, Paris 1996; *Pisanello. Painter to the Renaissance Court*, ex.-cat., ed. Luke

and carnations. They are partly taken over from Marian symbolism in religious paintings and possibly aim at a conveyance of Marian ideality concepts onto the portrait – a method that is well known from female portraits of the Renaissance.<sup>44</sup> The twig of juniper (Italian: »ginepro«) on the young woman's garment has symbolic meaning too, indicating either virtue and purity, or alluding to the name of the depicted woman, Ginevra d'Este – if she is the sitter. The juniper could also have apotropaic meaning, for, according to legend, its magical powers can protect from demons and illnesses.<sup>45</sup>

More important in our context, however, is the symbolism of the butterflies that adorn the picture on several places and promote the expression of the young woman's soul. The butterfly was generally understood as a sign for the ever regenerating powers of nature, as well as the longing of the soul – imprisoned in its earthly body – to return to its creator and thus to overcome death. Just as the butterfly always seeks the light, the soul aspires to the divine light of salvation. This topos is conveniently summarised by Leonardo da Vinci in one of his beautiful aphorisms, which reads: »Now you see that hope and the desire for repatriation and returning to our first state of chaos is similar to the urge which drives the butterflies into the light, and that man who with continual longing and full of joy looks always forward to the new spring, always to the new summer, always to new months and new years, deeming that the things he longs for are ever too late in coming – he does not realise that he is longing for his own destruc-



9. Pisanello, *Portrait of a Young Lady* (Ginevra d'Este?), c. 1440, tempera on panel, 42 × 29,6 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre

tion. But this desire is the very quintessence, the spirit of the elements, which, finding itself imprisoned by the soul, is ever longing to return from the human body to its giver.<sup>46</sup>

But this metaphoric notion is by far not all that is to be said about the meaning of the but-

Syson and Dillian Gordon, London 2001, 102–107. – Traditionally the sitter is assumed to be Ginevra d'Este († 1440), because of the twig of juniper (ginepro) on her dress. Recently, Luke Syson in the London Pisanello catalogue of 2001 (102–105) has suggested Margherita Gonzaga († July 1439) because of the pearls (lat. »margarita«/»pearl«) and the Gonzaga's heraldic colours on her dress. Dominique Cordellier, who earlier had denied this possibility ([as above], 28, 32–34), suggests Lucia d'Este († June 1437) and assumes that the portrait was commissioned for her wedding (in February 1437). As we

shall see, most iconographic features of the portrait point to its being conceived posthumously; this fits all three possible sitters which all had died at an early age.

44 Zöllner 1994 (as note 3), 34 and 54. – For flower symbolism see also André Chastel, *Les jardins et les fleurs*, in: *Revue de l'art* 51, 1981, 42–50.

45 *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, IX, Berlin 1938/1941, cols. 1–14, 5–12; *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, VIII, Munich 1997, col. 1888.

46 »Or vedi la speranza e 'l desiderio del ripatriarsi e ritornare nel primo caos fa a similitudine de la farfalla

terfly. The butterfly, as we know, slips out of a larva, and the larva again is nothing else but a caterpillar that has spun itself in and hence has mummified itself. In the reversed and, in a Christian reading, correct succession – caterpillar-larva-butterfly – the described metamorphosis gains a concrete meaning: as the caterpillar puts on the guise of death as a larva and regains new life as a butterfly, the human soul will resurrect after death. Thus, the butterflies in Pisanello's portrait are explicit symbols for the soul and they meaningfully express the hope of resurrection. The representation of the soul refers immediately to the religiously determined existence, for the soul only becomes a topic insofar as, through its mediate artistic rendering, the hope of eventual resurrection is expressed.<sup>47</sup>

However, in further details, the portrait in its most differentially rendered complexity, goes beyond the apparent symbolism of the butterfly as emblem for the soul. On the back part of the young woman's sleeve one can see a crystal vase, adorned with pearls and gold, out of which seem to grow plants (probably thistles) on top and roots at the bottom. As Ute Davitt Asmus has argued, the meaning of this at first rather strange vase is discernible from a portrait medal which Pisanello created for Lionello d'Este.<sup>48</sup> The piece, to be dated between 1441 and 1444, displays on the obverse (fig. 10) an austere left profile of Lionello d'Este with an adjacent Latin inscription stating his rank as a marquis. The inscription culminates on the bottom rim, immediately underneath the bust, in two crossing laurels. On



10. Pisanello, *Portrait Medal of Lionello d'Este*, c. 1441–1444, bronze, obverse, diameter 6,9 cm. Private Collection

the reverse of the medal one can see a reclining male nude on rocky ground and above him a two-handled vase with several cracks (fig. 11). Out of cracks and holes in the crumbling vessel, the roots of a shrub stick out on three spots, the shrub itself coming out of the vessel top. The two handles on both sides of the vase have anchors attached to them, the left one still intact and the other one on the right side broken. Parted by the shrub of the vase, the upper rim displays the artist's inscription. The reclining nude on stony ground – possibly meant as an image of Adam, the first human being at the instance of

a' lume dell'uomo, che con continui desideri sempre con festa aspetta la nuova primavera, sempre la nuova istate, sempre e nuovi mesi e nuovi anni, parendogli le desiderate cose, venendo, sieno troppo tarde. E non s'avvede che desidera la sua disfazione. Ma questo desiderio ène in quella quintessenza spirito degli elementi, che, trovandosi richiusa per animo dello umano corpo, desidera sempre ritornare al suo mandatorio.» Leonardo da Vinci, *Codex Arundel* (London, British Museum), fol. 156v, quoted after Anna Maria Brizio (ed.), *Scritti scelti di Leonardo da Vinci*, Turin 1952, 59–60. English translation partly after Richter (as note 9), § 1162.

47 Wilhelm H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, 7 vols., Leipzig 1884ff., III.2 (1902–1909), cols. 3234–3237; *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* VII, Berlin/Leipzig 1935/1936, cols. 1241–1244; *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, IV, Freiburg 1972, col. 96; Brigitte Tietzel, Neues vom »Meister der Schafsnasen«. Überlegungen zu dem New Yorker Doppelbildnis des Florentiner Quattrocento, in: *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 52, 1991, 17–42, 37–38; Cordelier (as note 43), 13.

48 Pisanello, *Portrait Medal of Lionello d'Este*, bronze, diameter 6,9 cm, Private Collection. George F. Hill,



11. Pisanello, *Portrait Medal of Lionello d'Este*, bronze, reverse, diameter 6,9 cm. Private Collection

his creation by god – contrasts with the vase above, the meaning of which we know rather well. It is the familiar vessel metaphor on display here, known through the saying »*corpus quasi vas est animi*«, a commonplace of Christian-humanist self reflection. The best known antique source for this concept is Cicero, who in his *Tusculan Disputations*<sup>49</sup> views the body as a vessel of the soul. The same thought has also been discussed by Christian writers, most prominently by Lactantius, who in his works *De opificio dei* and *Divinae institutiones* writes: »That, what the eyes can see is not man, but the vessel of man: his

nature and beauty are not visible in the outlines of their host vessel but in his deeds and character.«<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, the broken vessel with the shrub inside forms a subtle hint at the genuine spiritual qualities of man. In his representation, Pisanello reflects on the confrontation of body and soul, of content and form, in a very special way. Following a Christian reading of the Platonic metaphor of man as »heavenly plant« and »arbor inversa«,<sup>51</sup> shrub and root symbolise man's double nature. On the one hand, man is an animistic being, named »anthropos« in Greek, which denotes the upward-looking and upright inspired human. On the other hand, there is the Latin word »homo« for man, implicating his origins from soil – »humus« – and consequently his bonds with this soil (or earth). On a further stage of this metaphorical view, the human being has been regarded as an »arbor inversa« – as an inverted tree – whose roots do not grow down into the soil but up in the air, because man does not draw his real, his spiritual strength from the »humus« of the earth but from the air, that is, from the higher spiritual regions.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the plant in the vase is to be read as a direct reflection of the metaphor of the »arbor inversa« that reaches up into the air. This metaphor of the »arbor inversa« is now combined with the above-mentioned vessel metaphor, which again correlates with the intact body in its ideal nudity. The ideal, but earthly mortal perfection of the body finds an emphatic premonition of its own mortality in the fragile vase. However, by the

*A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini*, London 1930, no. 30; Ute Davitt Asmus, *Corpus quasi vas. Beiträge zur Ikonologie der italienischen Renaissance*, Berlin 1977, 17–40.

<sup>49</sup> Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* (as note 38), 1.51–52.

<sup>50</sup> »Hoc enim quod oculis subiectum est non homo, sed hominis receptaculum est: cuius qualitas et figura non ex lineamentis uasculi quo continetur, sed ex factis ac moribus peruidetur.« Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, 2.3.8 (*Patrologia Latina*, VI, cols. 264f.); idem, *De opificio Dei*, 1.11 (*Patrologia Latina*, VII, col. 12).

<sup>51</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 90a. – A. B. Chambers, »I Was But an Inverted Tree«, in: *Studies in the Renaissance* 8, 1961,

291–299, 292; David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the »Timaeus« of Plato*, Leyden 1986, 324–325.

<sup>52</sup> For this metaphor in general see Philo of Alexandria, *De plantatione*, 16–22; idem, *De congressu eruditionis gratia*, 56; idem, *Quis rerum divinarum heres*, 34, for its pseudo-etymological explanation see, for example, Alain de Lille, *Distinctiones monastice*, 2.354 (*Patrologia latina*, CCX, col. 707). For the afterlife of the »arbor inversa« see Chambers (as note 51); Davitt Asmus (as note 48), 6 and 32–33; Runia (as note 51), 324–325.



12. Follower of Donatello (?), *Bust of a Youth*, after 1468 (?), bronze, 42 × 42, cm. Florence, Museo nazionale del Bargello

same token survival is possible for the Christian soul, because man as an »arbor inversa« shares the higher spheres and therefore transcends his earthly body.

One can also observe a close link between this complex symbolism and the artist's signature »PISANI PICTOR-IS OPVS«: »This is the work of the painter Pisano«. It does not seem to be a coincidence that the signature (PISANI PICTOR) is interrupted immediately after the nominative form of »Pictor« – painter – by the shrub or tree, which could be called »arbor« in latin. The whole can indeed be read as a pictogram, as for example recommended by Leon Battista Alber-

ti.<sup>53</sup> If one inserts the word »ARBOR« where the image of the shrub is (i.e. replacing the shrub with the word ARBOR), the genitive ending »IS« that originally belonged to »PICTOR«, now forms the word »ARBORIS« (of the tree). The painter (PICTOR) can now also be identified as »ARBOR« and he is, therefore, the said »anthropos« who, as a metaphorical »arbor inversa«, has his roots not in the lower earthly regions (humus) but in the lofty spheres of the spirit. Thus, the pictographic inscription denotes the spiritual nature of artistic work, which the painters and sculptors of those days did not cease to emphasise. By means of this emphasis on the spiritual part of the artistic process they could indicate the emancipation from lower handicraft on the one hand; and on the other, the artist's self, his soul or spiritual powers could also become part of the representation. As early as that, in a medal created around 1441, we find an area of tension between two levels: not only the soul of the depicted patron, Lionello d'Este, is the subject matter of the work, but intermediately also the soul of the artist who elucidates his spiritual powers indirectly in a pictogram.

Finally, the didactic and moralising note of the depiction on the reverse is taken up by the motif of the two anchors visible on the medal only. The anchor reminds of another well-known metaphor, namely that of the human life as a journey at sea, as formulated by Pythagoras. With the help of this metaphor of the sea journey of life with its supporting and sustaining anchor, Pythagoras distinguished between the outer and inner values of man. Thus, the metaphor takes up the relationship between outside and inside, body and soul, that has been introduced through the image of the vase and also by the juxtaposition of vase and male nude. Moreover, the motif of the anchor on its own indicates the ethical preference of the interior and spiritual as opposed to the

<sup>53</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, 8.24.

<sup>54</sup> For the text, attributed to Pythagoras, see *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii libri duo posteriores recensuit Otto Hense*, I, Berlin 1894, 1.29, 13–14, and for the diffu-

sion of Stobaeus' manuscripts before the 1535/1536 »editio princeps« *ibid.*, XXII–XXIII; see also Davitt Amus (as note 48), 21.

<sup>55</sup> See Hebr. 6.19; *Reallexikon für Antike und Christen-*

bodily and exterior. This morality, as found in Pythagoras, reads like this: exterior things such as wealth, bodily beauty and fame denote a brittle anchor in the journey of life; and only inner values like virtue, prudence, generosity and courage make up a strong and unbreakable anchor.<sup>54</sup> Finally, in a genuinely Christian reading the metaphor of the anchor expresses the hope of resurrection.<sup>55</sup>

In two of the examples discussed so far – the profile portrait and the portrait medal – the depiction of the soul has a concrete purpose, which we might call a didactical function. The human soul, trapped in the body, gives evidence of man's higher vocation and expresses his hope of resurrection in a wider, religious sense. Furthermore, the soul is intermediately represented through signs, symbols or metaphors. This kind of symbolism and the said didactic purpose, can also be traced in an almost life-size Quattrocento bronze bust, kept in the Bargello in Florence, traditionally dated to the 1440s to 1450s, and for a long time attributed to Donatello (fig. 12).<sup>56</sup>

The young man portrayed here wears a huge plaquette around his neck, which shows a chariot with a naked and winged charioteer. The composition derives formally from an antique gem that entered Lorenzo de' Medici's Florentine collection in 1471 (fig. 13).<sup>57</sup> Although the piece from the Medici collection does not show a winged, naked young man as charioteer but a Nike,<sup>58</sup> the formal resemblance between the gem and the plaquette is fairly obvious.



13. *Victory as Charioteer*, Sardonyx cameo, Graeco-Roman, 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. Naples, Museo Nazionale

The image of the over-sized plaquette contrasts with the otherwise naked chest of the young man; it constitutes a second level of representation, so to say, parallel to the man's face. This plaquette visualises the concept, known from Plato's *Phaedrus*, of the human soul as a chariot with two winged horses and a charioteer.<sup>59</sup> As we shall see, the bust can hardly be dated in the 1440s and 1450s, nor can it be attributed to Donatello († 1466), but rather was presumably executed in the 1470s under the influence of Marsilio Ficino's *Phaedrus* translation. In fact, the major source for an understanding of the portrait bust is Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*. The por-

tum, I, Stuttgart 1950, cols. 440–443 (P. Stumpf); *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, I, Freiburg 1968, col. 119.

<sup>56</sup> Follower of Donatello, *Bust of a Youth*, bronze, 42 × 42 cm, Florence, Museo nazionale del Bargello. – Horst W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello*, 2 vols., Princeton 1957, here I, 141–143; Jane Schuyler, *Florentine Busts: Sculpted Portraiture in the Fifteenth Century*, New York/London 1976, 96–100; Charles Avery, *Donatello. Catalogo Completo*, Florence 1991, no. 72; Luba Freedmann, *The Counter-Portrait: The Quest for the Ideal in Italian Renaissance Portraiture*, in: *Il ritratto e la memoria. Materiali 3. A cura di Augusto Gentili, Philippe Morel, Claudia Cieri Via*, Florence 1993, 63–81, 68–69.

<sup>57</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renaissances in Western Art*, New York 1972, 189; John Pope-Hennessy, *Renaissance Bronzes from the Samuel H. Kress Collection*, London 1957, 74; Phyllis P. Bober and Ruth Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture. A Handbook of Sources*, London/Oxford 1986, 203.

<sup>58</sup> Nicole Dacos, *Il tesoro di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Florence 1972, no. 7, fig. 2; Bober/Rubinstein (as note 57), no. 172.

<sup>59</sup> Platon, *Phaedrus*, 246A–E, and 253D–254E; Rudolf Wittkower, *A Symbol of Platonic Love in a Portrait Bust by Donatello*, in: *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1, 1937/1938, 260–261.

trayal in that respect clearly relates less to the original text by Plato than to Ficino's comment on his translation of *Phaedrus*, which he wrote between April 1466 and November 1468. In his commentary, Ficino speaks deliberately of actually reproducing the soul (effingere) and its reproduced form (forma);<sup>60</sup> and furthermore, Ficino's comment – unlike Plato's original text and more clearly than Ficino's translation of this part of the text<sup>61</sup> – suggests that the charioteer, also identified with Eros, has wings. The respective part of Ficino's commentary reads: »The charioteer is the intellect and equals the essence. The charioteer's head is the power that unites him to the universe's principle, and rules over the intellect, and equals the unity. [...] The wing is the upward-drawing power: through this power the divine souls are said to be winged, meaning ›on the wings‹, for they are always uplifted; but our souls are winged, meaning ›fledged‹, for they can at least be uplifted. Preeminently the wings are the charioteer's, then the better horse's, and only finally the worse horse's, since the worse horse can be raised by the better and can share a certain blessedness with it. Each horse's power [or wing] is akin, for both horses were generated simultaneously by the world's author and are sempiternal. They are said therefore to be yoked and paired, so to speak: one thinks of them as making up what one might call a two-horsed chariot (hence my use of the word ›yoke‹).«<sup>62</sup>

At first sight, the bronze bust appears to be a representation of an ideal figure and not the por-

trait of a real person. The seemingly neat execution, the evenness of the rendering and the smoothness of the polished material suggest ideality more than anything, at first.<sup>63</sup> Yet, a closer examination reveals rather individual features, such as: two swollen veins on the right side of the otherwise smooth forehead, different ear lobes, a chin that looks prominent if seen from the front, but viewed from the sides is soft and receding. The slightly hooked nose does not look like an example of idealised beauty either. All this implies that the representation, though slightly idealised, could well be the image of a definite and still fairly young individual.

The image of the charioteer that Plato and Ficino talk about visualises not only the soul itself but above all the order and the control of the struggling forces inside. Eros as a charioteer stands for the intellect (intellectus) and his head stands for that power (virtus) that commands the intellect and relates it to the rules of the cosmos (universi principium). The one horse of the chariot represents reason, the other one irrational instinct (appetitus). Therefore, on the plaquette of the bust, the horse at the back, as an embodiment of reason, advances obediently forwards and upwards, whereas the horse at the front, representing the hardly controllable nature of instinct and irrational appetite, is shown as an unruly animal. In this detail, the artist also follows an idea suggested by Ficino's text: »The better horse is the rational power, which may examine either universals or particulars. Its com-

60 Michael J. B. Allen, *Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer*, Berkeley etc. 1981, 96–99. – Generally for Plato in the Florentine Renaissance see Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Humanismus und Renaissance*, 2 vols., Munich 1974, here I, 50–68 and passim; James Hankins, *Plato in the Renaissance*, 2 vols., Leiden etc. 1990, 265–366. – Ficino had already referred to the metaphor of the soul from Plato's *Phaedrus* in his famous *epistola de divino furore* to Pellegrino Agli from 1st December 1457 (Marsilio Ficino, *Lettere*, I, *Epistolarum familiarum liber I. A cura di Sebastiano Gentile*, Florence 1990, no. I.6, 19–28).

61 For Ficino's translation see *Platonis opera a Marsilio Ficino traducta*, Paris 1518, fols. CLXXIXv–CLXXXIXr (Phaedrus), esp. fols. CLXXXIIIr

(Phaedrus, 246A) and CLXXXIVv (Phaedrus, 253D–254E).

62 »Auriga quidem est intellectus congruens cum essentia. Caput autem aurige est unifica virtus ad ipsum universi principium, intellectui presidens, cum unitate conveniens. [...] Ala vero est potentia sursum ducens; per quam anime quidem divine dicuntur alate quoniam semper sunt elevate, nostre vero subalate, quoniam saltem elevari possunt. Ale potissimum sunt aurige, mox melioris equi, consequentur vero deterioris, quoniam per meliorem attolli potest atque cum ipso beatitudinis cuiusdam esse particeps. Equi utriusque potentia est connata; uterque enim simul est ab opifice mundi genitus atque sempiternus. Ideo dicuntur et coniugati et quasi bigas vel (ut ita dixerim)

panion, the [irrational] appetite, is also called a horse. In ourselves and the gods alike, the better horse and the charioteer participate in identity more than in difference, in rest more than in motion. The worse horse is the imagination together with nature (that is the vegetative power), and appetite, and the companion of both. In us this worse horse presumably participates in motion and difference more than their opposites, but in the gods these opposites are tempered.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, the charioteer functions as the controlling rational authority. As one would expect, this pictured struggle of opposing powers between the various forces of the soul and their domestication through the intellect is intrinsically a reflection of life on earth itself, and it contains a definite comment regarding a correct way of living. The young man is to understand that the intellect can guarantee the control over the several opposing forces in the soul. If one accepts this didactic note, which was probably aimed at the portrayed young man, one also finds an explanation for the strange fact that the charioteer is not Eros himself, but a young man roughly the same age as the person portrayed. In fact, the charioteer appears to be the portrayed person's double, who, mirrored in the image of his own intellect, restrains the forces of the soul in the guise of two horses. This would also explain the notable contrast between the relatively expressionless face of the youth and the swollen veins on his forehead: the veins stand for the hardly restrainable nature

of the instinct, whereas the calm evenness of the face denotes the already attained control of that instinct.

The didactic appeal, accomplished through the depiction on the plaquette and the rendering on the forehead, corresponds to ethical associations about the problem of expression in portraits, as found in antique sources.<sup>65</sup> Some of these sources, concerned with views of physiognomy important for portraying,<sup>66</sup> might have played a rôle for our bronze bust as well. One of its most prominent features is the forehead, and that, according to traditional beliefs shows a person's character particularly well:<sup>67</sup> »Ma spesso ne la fronte il cor si legge« (but often one may read the heart on the forehead) – as Petrarch has it.<sup>68</sup> More specific is a view from pseudo-Aristotelian physiognomy: a broad and bulging forehead betrays an excitable and quick tempered mind.<sup>69</sup> We find similar opinions in Pietro d'Abano's *Liber compilationis physonomie*, written in 1295, known through several manuscripts and published in 1474 in Padua. Here we read that a domed forehead denotes anger, and a receding hairline implies a person steered by fury.<sup>70</sup> The markedly domed and rather broad forehead of the bronze bust does indeed display a remarkably advanced receding hairline (given the tender age of the sitter). The shape of the forehead, then, betrays the same immoderateness that can be traced in the swollen veins, which are of course a commonplace, but are also mentioned as a sign of anger in aristotelian physiognomics.<sup>71</sup>

bigam conficere iudicantur, quam ego coniugii appellatione interpretatus sum.« Allen (as note 60), 98f.

<sup>63</sup> Freedman (as note 56), 68–69.

<sup>64</sup> »Melior equus est virtus ipsa rationalis, sive per universalia discurrat, sive per singula. Dicitur equus etiam appetitus eius comes. Est autem equus eiusmodi sicut et auriga tam in nobis quam in diis identitatis magis quam alteritatis particeps, statusque magis quam motus. Equus vero deterior est imaginatio una cum natura, id est vegetali potentia, appetitusque utriusque comes. Equus eiusmodi in nobis quidem motus alteritatisque magis quam oppositorum compos existimatur, in diis autem adequat opposita.« Allen (as note 60), 98f.

<sup>65</sup> Aristoteles, *Politics*, 8.5.7–9 (1340a); Philostratos the

Younger, *Imagines*, 390–391; Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, 35.98.

<sup>66</sup> Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, 35.88–89, and Pietro d'Abano, *Liber compilationis physionomiae*, Padua 1474, quoted by Johannes Thomann, Pietro d'Abano on Giotto, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 54, 1991, 238–244.

<sup>67</sup> Gauricus, *De sculptura* (1504), 146–149.

<sup>68</sup> Petrarca, *Il canzoniere*, 222 and 224.

<sup>69</sup> Aristotle, *Historia animalium*, 1.8 (491b) (*Opera omnia*, III, 8).

<sup>70</sup> Pietro d'Abano, *Liber compilationis physionomie*, Padua 1474, fol. 24v, quoted after Hubert Steinke, Giotto und die Physiognomik, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 59, 1996, 523–547, here 530.

The portrait bust in the Bargello demonstrates the problem of expression on two very different levels: the artistic rendering of the soul and its control through the intellect is executed firstly through the plaquette with the chariot from Ficino's *Phaedrus* adaptation, that is through a picture on a sculpture whose meaning can only be unlocked with the help of a text. Secondly, the subject matter of the plaquette is reflected in the young man's countenance, where smoothness contrasts with angrily swollen veins. Besides, the rendering of expression is not only an artistic problem, for the expression is tied to a didactic purpose of the portrait that advises its presumably still young addressee how to master his life by co-ordinating the opposing forces of the soul through his intellect.

In conclusion, we can state that the expression of the soul in 15th- and early 16th-century portraiture was executed with the help of attributes, signs, symbols, metaphors and references to a number of texts, both antique and genuinely Christian. Portraits thus correspond to well-known humanists attempts to reconcile antique ideas with Christian belief and to describe the

immortality of the soul with the help of antique metaphor.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, portraiture and the poetry written about portraits display a particular attachment to virtue as the most important inner value of a person as well as to the survival of virtue after death. Thus portraits claim maxims for living and also give evidence of a broader ideal of moral conduct which expresses the hope for the spiritual survival of the individual. The sense of this endeavour is to provide icons of identification, to secure the presence of the dead,<sup>73</sup> to construct ideal images of the exemplary »orthophysic« subject<sup>74</sup> and to shape profane works of art to spiritual dimensions. This spiritual quality of early portraits had also to do with the fact, that by the end of the 15th century, portraiture as an independent and non-religious genre only looked back at a relatively short history. Furthermore, the visual arts in the West in general still had a long lasting and strong attachment to Christian belief.<sup>75</sup> However, with the beginning of the 16th century autonomous portraiture gradually lost its spiritual aspiration and increasingly became an independent and secular genre. As such it has been perceived ever since.

71 Aristotle, *Minor Works with an English Translation* by W. S. Hett, London/Cambridge (Mass.) 1970, 81–137, here 127 (Physiognomica, 6 [812a]).

72 See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Humanismus und Renaissance*, 2 vols., Munich 1974, 50–86; Uta Rüschi, *Untersuchungen zu Cristoforo Landino, »De anima«* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 41), Stuttgart 1993, 4–29.

73 For this concept of securing the »real presence« of the dead in society see, for example, Otto Gerhard Oexle, *Memoria und Memorialbild*, in: *Memoria. Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch (Münstersche Mittelalterschriften, 48), Munich 1984, 384–440, here 385–387.

74 See Harry Berger, *Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture*, in: *Representations* 46, 1994, 87–120, 94, with reference to Jacques Lacan's »orthophysic« subject (Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, transl. Alan Sheridan, New York 1987, 74–75).

75 For the attachment of portraiture to Christian faith see Justus Müller Hofstede, *Florentiner Maler des Trecento und Quattrocento im Zeichen von Heilserwartung und Künstlerruhm. Zur Entstehung des frühen Selbstporträts im Kontext der sakralen Historie*, in: *Florenz in der Frührenaissance. Gedenkschrift für Paul Oskar Kristeller (1905–1999)*, ed. Justus Müller Hofstede, Reinbach 2002, 35–108.

Abbildungsnachweis: 1–3, 10, 11 Private collection. – 4 Madrid, Collection Thyssen-Bornemisza. – 5–8 Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. – 9 Paris, Musée du Louvre. – 12 Florence, Museo nazionale del Bargello. – 13 Naples, Museo Nazionale.