

Raphael: mythe and realities

Between Erasmus and Venice, who really was Raphael?

by Karel Vereycken, Paris, June 2000.

[**WARNING: THIS IS A UNCORRECTED DRAFT:** Even when corrected, all translations are to be considered as done by the author, mostly from French to English ; consequently they can't be honestly used as quotes of reference.]

Prologue:

Far from being a final judgment, this report is nothing but an attempt to elaborate our understanding of the work and life of Raphael. As fervent humanists we have developed over decades a great passion for the achievements of the Italian and European renaissance. We do not have the intention to show that this or that one is the "good guy" or the "bad guy". To label somebody to be good or bad without knowing why, is at least idle talk, or very simple not serious at all. Happily for us, the history of the world can't be squared into a simple Manichean pantheon where the "Gods" and the "damned" quarrel for a seat.

But after having enlarged our knowledge enriched with iconographical and historical elements which require supplementary research in order to correctly interpret them and after a broad discussion, we do can restate a judgment.

Several friends asked me very sincerely: "*Why demolish Raphael, in these times where an epidemic of ugliness is ravaging the planet?*". I can only answer that if we really want to educate a new generation of artists, truth needs to be known.

Some information contained in this report under the form of long quotations to give each the opportunity to grasp the total context, can create unbearable paradoxes for those struck by ideological blindness. I took here the terrible risk of wanting neither please neither displease, but is obvious that the way these data are presented is necessarily defined by my subjective judgment. Let those who approve my thought process be my most ardent critiques !

For the solution of paradoxes always results from the elaboration of a higher "*picture*" by the discovery of a superior coherence integrating the anomalies of the former geometry. All are invited to participate in that process and to submit contrary elements.

Method:

This report will cover five domains:

1. Venice against the Renaissance: how the oligarchy of Genoa/Venice tried to annihilate the achievements of the Council of Florence: peace based on the creation of a community of principles between nation-states committed to develop each single individual. Our

period stretches from the **Council of Florence** (1439) to the **Council of Trent** (1545), with emphasis on the major point of inflection being pope Julius II scheme to use the **League of Cambrai** for his own goals. The wedding between Genoa and Venice ("*globalization*") was operated by Julius' banker **Agostino Chigi**. The role of Erasmus of Rotterdam, called the "*prince of the humanists*" by his contemporaries in the battle against that oligarchy.

2. The extra-ordinary life of the "scourge of princes", Venetian super-spy, Pietro Aretino. The career of a blackmail kingpin in service of Venice. Sex and truth: the weapons of the "*clean hands*" of Venice.

3. The cultural and theological goals of Julius II: make Rome, under control of the oligarchy, the center of a **new Roman empire**. Justify the earthly power of that empire by making Roman Catholicism the prolongation of roman paganism; the cult of Apollo; the rebirth of the **Orpheus cult** through **Petrarchism, Bembism** and **Mannerism**. The critiques of Erasmus.

4. Chigi, Aretino, Raphael and the others.

5. A fresh look on the "Stanza della Segnatura", analyzing content, motivations, intellectual authors and executors. The integration of our new understanding makes a new interpretation possible.

1. Venice against the Renaissance

The League of Cambrai

The kernel of the fight of Cosimo de' Medici, Nicholas of Cusa, Louis XI and the popes at the origin of the Council of Florence, was their struggle against the financial powers of Genoa and Venice. The project for building such an alliance of states and political forces determined to settle the problem once and for all (including militarily) dates at least from as early as 1467 (3 years after the death of Cusa and Pius II), when **Federigo Montefeltro** heads an anti-venetian ligue, and one has to consider that the growing resentment and revolt against Venice becomes a generalized phenomena at the closing of the fifteenth century.

Charles Diehl, in his *"La République de Venise"* states that *"Venice took a stand against (French king) Charles VIII; it struck a deal with Louis XII. (...) But, while its encroachments in (the papal territories of) Romagna displeased the pope, the close facing of the French established in Milan shifted the cordiality of the relationship between Venice and Louis XII. As of 1501, the king of France was considering reaching an understanding with the emperor (Maximilian) to take action against the city of Saint Mark; One of the treaties signed at Blois in 1504 was an outline of mobilizing a league against the Republic (of Venice) and to share its continental possessions, and the pope was implicated in this. In 1503, Julius II had mounted on the papal throne. Genovese of origin, he violently despised the Venetians; especially he didn't forgive them they stole from the Holy See the city of Ravenna and the Romagna region. One of his first words was: "I will arm against them all the princes of Christianity"; He did as he had said. From the day he ruled, Rome only talked nothing but about the insolence of the Venetians and the hatred they provoked; and one waited, one was looking for the opportunity to humiliate them. (...) Julius told the Venetian ambassador "I will drive you back to the state of a fishermen's village" to which the diplomat responded, not without insolence: "And we, Holy father, if you're not reasonable, we will make of you a little parish priest". (...) With its usual and tenace courage, it held firmly. Venice lined up 40.000 men and an excellent artillery; it suffered nevertheless at Agnadel, on the 14th of May 1509, a crushing defeat."*

Ivan Cloulas, in *"Julius II"* writes (p. 177): *"This unexpected disaster plunged the venetian people, formerly so proud, into immediate capitulation. Scrapping its habitual despising attitude, bringing it to adopt an attitude of conduct close to cowardliness; the Senate, without loosing time in useless talks, restituted to the pope his possessions in Romagna"*.

Pietro Ciccone, in *"The house of Este"* (p. 31) indicates the treasonous role of Agostino Chigi, the Sienese financier who bought the cardinals vote for the election of Julius II. **Webster Tarpley**, in *"The Venetian Conspiracy"* gives more information on the background of this treason (p. 41): *"What probably accounted more directly for Julius II's decision to reverse his alliances was a deal mediated with the Venetians by Agostino Chigi. (...) He proposed that the Venetians stop buying alum, needed in textile and glass manufacture, from the Turks, but contract for a large shipment at higher prices from the alum mines at Tolfa in the Papal States-- mines for which he, Chigi, was acting as agent. To sweeten the pot, Chigi offered the Venetians tens of thousands of ducats in much-needed loans. The Venetians, fearing a rapid French offensive, accepted. Their own state finances were in a total shambles. Only a Chigi loan allowed them to hire enough Swiss mercenaries to hold out against the French and the Imperial landsknechte."*

Ivan Cloulas details this (p. 207), specifying that the deal that saved Venice's neck took place in 1511, and not in 1509 as Tarpley tends to suggest: *"Received with royal pomp in name of the Seigniorship by Antonio Grimani, on february 23rd 1511, Chigi will stay in Venice till august to fix the terms of a curious contract. As General contractor of the papal alum mines of la Tolfa, the papal banker will lend 40.000 ducats to the Venetian Republic in exchange for the venetian commitment to buy a huge quantity of alum (7.000 cantares). This alum, bought at the highest price (paid 20 ducats/cantare), will be put at the disposal of Alessandro Schiapi, Chigi's representative in Venice, for a moderate price (17 ducats/cantare): the difference between both prices being a generous profit which represents in reality, the interests on the 40.000 ducats"*

loan. As a guaranty, Chigi received precious objects of the Treasure of Saint Mark, estimated at 30.000 ducats."

Ivan Cloulas (p. 160): *"Above everybody rises Agostino Chigi, the Sienese banker, General contractor of the papal alum mines of la Tolfa since the reign of Alexander VI. The favor which benefits this personality by Julius II is somehow astonishing, being it a banker who served for a longtime Cesar Borgia. The pontiff, following a tradition, has bestowed since his accession of the throne the title of "depository" to one of his Genovese compatriots, Paolo Sauli, the charge of operate all financial operations of the Holy See in liaison with the cardinal Raffaello Sansoni-Riario. But Chigi will not fall in disgrace, because he advanced considerable amounts of money to Giuliano della Rovere (Julius II) to buy the electors, and he has marvelously fructified the exploitation and exportation of the alun coming out of the papal mines. The experience and the value of the Sienese make him a partner of the different bankers of the papacy, notably the Sauli and the Fugger, which will increase their wealth that in Germany the fruitful commerce of indulgences will develop itself."*

"The spectacular financial success of Chigi will be rewarded by his entry in the family clan of the Della Rovere (the family of Julius II). He will buy for his family a chapel of the Santa Maria del Popolo church (of which Raphael will be the architect), and several relatives of the pope will be buried there, and he will change the consecration of the chapel by introducing Saint Augustine (Agostino oblige...) and the Madonna of Loreto of which he is a votary. Another papal bull, in 1509, nominates Agostino Chigi, his brothers and his descendants, full members of the family of the pope. From here on, their name becomes Chigi della Rovere. Agostino then decides to live nobly outside the quarter where the banks have their offices and their residences: he orders the construction of a villa on the waterside of the Tiber, amidst the vineyards. The intimacy of the banker and the pope is so close that in the summer of 1511, when Chigi has to stay in Venice for financial negotiations, Julius II, just returned from a disappointing military campaign against Ferrara, will inspect the builder's yard to replace him. The palace will become famous and will change names to be called the "Farnesina" (decorated by Raphael and his team)."

Giorgio Vasari, in the *"Lives"* (p. 327), written on request of **Paolo Giovio**, passionate friend and admirer of Raphael, describes all the effort that Chigi had to put into works to convince the painter to execute the frescos: *"Raphael was a very amorous man who was fond of woman, and he was always quick to serve them. This was the reason why, as he continued to pursue his carnal delights, he was treated with too much consideration and acquiescence by his friends. When his dear friend Agostino Chigi commissioned him to paint the first loggia in his palace (1515-17), Raphael could not really put his mind to his work because of his love for one of his mistresses; Agostino became so desperate over this, that, through his own efforts and with the assistance of others, he worked things out in such a way that he finally managed to bring this woman of Raphael's to come and stay with him on a constant basis in the section of the house where Raphael was working, and that was the reason why the work came to be finished. In this work, Raphael executed all the cartoons and colored many of the figures in fresco with his own hand."*

To come back to the issue of the league of Cambrai, **Cloulas** writes (p.184) *"France is in the eyes of Julius II the first foreign power to eliminate from Italian soil. Heavily present in Genoa (which Louis XI infeodated to Milan in 1463) and in the Milan region, France enlarged its influence on numerous principalities (...) A military operation will be necessary to bring back Ferrare under the legitimate obedience of Rome. Julius II imposes the financing of this enterprise at his banker Chigi. The financier offers 40.000 ducats in exchange for the depositing of the papal tiara of Paul II. But he obtains a fallacious guaranty: the deposit will be taken back in 1512, without him obtaining the reimbursement of his loan. A representative of the pope will come to recuperate the crown with an order to arrest the banker in case he doesn't consent at relinquishing her"*.

Charles Diehl adds: *"And furthermore, for the new policy aimed against France that Julius will inaugurate, the reconciliation with Venice was an indispensable condition "If Venice didn't exist, declared the sovereign pontiff, one should make another one"*.

Very soon, on **October 5th. 1511**, Julius II will form the **Holy League** with Venice against the French with the outcry *"Fuori i Barbari"* (kick out the barbarians). To rally the Swiss, he will make Mathias Swinner cardinal. To convince Spain, he will lift on July 3rd 1510 the papal bull by which Alexander VI had divided the kingdom of Naples between the French and the Spanish (giving it all to Spain by doing so). To Henry VIII, which was the new king of England after the death of Henry VII on **April 21, 1509**, he will send a consecrated golden rose, trying to convince the king to have a new landing on the shores of France...

Julius II seemed to have succeeded in outstripping a project prepared in advance by the humanist forces, to use it for his personal goals. **Tarpley** underlines that *"The destruction of Byzantium by the Turks gave the Venetians a slogan with which to organize their war against the Renaissance. Since the Roman Empire had finally ended, it was left to the Venetians to arrogate to themselves the task of building a new Roman Empire. (...) "The Venetians are called new Romans" confided the patrician Bernardo Bembo to his diary."*

Erasmus against Venice

The *"strong hypothesis"* which needs to be studied and substantiated is the role of **Erasmus of Rotterdam** and his allies as the organizing force behind the League of Cambrai. Several indications permit us to formulate that hypothesis.

A footnote in *"Erasmus"* (p. 149, Editions Bouquins) remarks *"On December 10, 1508 an alliance was concluded between Louis XII, Maximilian, Ferdinand of Aragon and the pope Julius II. Margareth of Austria, daughter of Maximilian and governess of the Low Countries, had been the soul of these political negotiations."*

French historian **Michelet** writes in *"Renaissance et Réforme"* (p. 144): *"The treaty of Cambrai was manipulated behind the doors between this subtle hand (Margareth) and the bulky hand of Amboise (Louis XII)"*

Ivan Cloulas describes (p. 224) how Louis XII had mobilized the French poets to denounce Julius II. One of them, **Jean Lemaire des Belges** wrote that *"the actual pope looks martial and unprepossessing, under his war harness he never leaves, although it fits him like dancing fits the Puss in Boots. He will never give birth to a new world, as he believes, because pigs will always eat acorns, the oaks will loose their leafs at the right season and the wood will be used for the most adequate purpose" (the oak was the emblem of the Della Rovere family) "*

" (...) Having made until then a career as librarian of Margareth of Austria, regentess of the Netherlands in Mechelen, he gained some fame for his delicate poems, such as the two "Epistles of the Green Lover", narrating the posthumous life of the parrot of his mistress" (...) "With good will, he will try to convince the sovereign (Anne de Bretagne, wife of Louis XII) that her husband was not in error by going to war against Julius II".

One has to remember that Erasmus had been in service of Henri de Berghes, bishop of Cambrai, of which the younger brother, Antoine was and adviser to Philippe the Handsome of Burgundy. Antoine de Berghes was an Erasmus correspondent and it was him who accompanied Margareth of Austria to Dôle for her wedding with Philipert of Savoie, on November 28, 1507. It is elsewhere established that the regents of Burgundy Margareth and later Mary of Hungary were friends and protectors of Erasmus, especially at the court of Mechelen where she seated as regentess of the Netherlands starting from march 18, 1507. In the same Flemish city lived also **Jérôme of Busleyden**, financial backer of Erasmus project, the *"Trilanguage College."*

Jacopo Barbari, who painted the famous portrait of **Fra Luca Pacioli**, the Franciscan monk and the collaborator of **Piero della Francesca** who taught Euclid to **Leonardo da Vinci**, was born in Venice around 1450, but entered in service of Margareth of Austria which paid her a pension. He died in Mechelen in 1516. Barbari was the nickname given by his fellow venetians who thought he spent too much time with the *"barbarians"* of the north. His knowledge of Venice, and the engraved map of Venice which was printed in Nuremberg in 1500 by Dürers patron **Anton Kalb**, could have served the ligue of Cambrai. Albrecht Dürer, himself an associate of Erasmus, through **Pirckheimer**, visits Venice in 1495 and meets probably Pacioli and Barbari. When Dürer visits the Netherlands in 1521, he meets Margareth of Austria and asks her to give him the drawings of Jacopo Barbari, which she refuses, since she had received these drawings as a gift from him.

Erasmus shows clearly the Venetian modus operandi of financial manipulation which he describes in the colloquium *"The friend of Lying and the friend of Truth"*.

Erasmus quote of Colloquium

"The friend of Lying and the friend of Truth"

Phylétymus. (...) Give me solely an example, to convince me that your arguments are grounded.

Pseudochée. Well, I do a lot of business with a lot of people ; I buy, I sell, I recover debts, I rent, I borrow, I receive deposits.

Phylétymus. And next ?

Pseudochée. In a general way, I concentrate on deceiving preferably those for whom it is difficult to catch me red-handed.

Phyl. That is ?

Pseu. *The fools, people without memory, the scatterbrained, the absent and the dead.*

Phyl. *It is certain that the dead man has no way to react.*

Pseu. *If I sell something on credit, I note it carefully down on my book accounts.*

Phil. *And then ?*

Pseu. *When paying time comes, I charge more goods to the buyer than delivered. Whether he has forgotten or didn't take care, I gain a good profit.*

Phil. *And if he discovers the difference ?*

Pseu. *I show him my book accounts.*

Phil. *But if he shows or proves that he never received the goods you pretend he did ?*

Pseu. *I protest with my last energy, because in this art, one has to be resolutely without shame. As last resort, as ultimate recourse, I can always invent something.*

Phil. *And if you are taken in flagrant error ?*

Pseu. *Nothing more easy : my servitor made a mistake, or I incorrectly understood. Moreover it is smart to mingle together different accounts, so it gets easier to confound. For example certain goods are barred, because they have been paid ; others are still to be paid. I confound everything in my last note, without swiping something off. At the time the client has to pay, he obviously contests, but generally I win, by heaven. The other secret of my art : I usually choose, to be paid, the day that my debtor goes on a long travel and is unprepared. : since myself I'm always ready. When somebody makes a deposit, I keep it secretly in my home and don't register it. Huge laps of time separates the depositor from the discovery of my act. When the denials become useless, I pretend I lost it, or I fraudulently that I sent it and accuse the messenger. Then, if there is no way but rendering it, I only proceed after having used it.*

Phyl. *A truly admirable art ! Art admirable,*

Pseu. *Sometimes, when it is possible for me, I receive twice the payment of the same debt: first in my house, and then in the house of the debtor where I go rapidly. However, time causes oblivion and confuses accounts; somebody dies or goes on a long trip. In the worst case, I will have used one's other money. I go to the point to get people to favor my lies by feigning generosity, but always with the other one's good, since of my own wealth, I wouldn't even give a penny to my own mother. While, taken separately, the profit generated in each affair could seem meager (and in reality I'm involved in very many things) , the totality produces a substantial gain. For the rest, for not getting discovered I use many tricks, but especially this one; I intercept all possible letters; I open them and read them. When one of them seems potentially susceptible to hurt my interest, I keep it, or when I give it to the destination, I chose the moment. On top, with my lies, I generate discord between people separated by a long distance.*

(...)

Phyl. *But this art, we others, peasants of the Danube, who call a cat a cat, we call it habitually theft!*

Pseu. *How ignorant you are about civil law ! Can one sue for theft a man who made disappear a deposit, denied a debt or made a little trick of that sort?*

Phil. *It should be so.*

Pseu. *Admire thus the wisdom of our artifices, which generate even more, or at least as much as theft, and nearly without any risk.*

Phyl. *Damned you are with your tricks and lies! I even refuse to say you farewell.*

Pseu. *And you can boil in anger with your scattered truth! In the mean time I will live agreeably of my steeling and cheating under the auspices of Ulysses and Mercury.*

That conflict between *"we ourselves, peasants of the Danube"* and those who live comfortably of the pillage under the auspice of Ulysses and Mercury is a clear reference to the European humanist way of looking at the venetian oligarchy.

Johan Huizinga in his *"Erasme"* (p. 113) describes Erasmus travel to Italy in the following way: *"Already in 1503, he declared to Anne de Borselen (a financial backer at that time) 'Go to Italy to get a doctoral title? All of this is nothing but folly. But one has to conform to the habits that times demand'. And once again he seems looking for an excuse to present (his friends) Servatius and Johannes Obrecht: 'We have obtained the doctorate of Holy Theology, and it arrived against my own intention and solely because I was overrrun by supplications of my friends'. The destination of the voyage was Bologna. But when Erasmus arrives there, a military action just started there, which forced him to retire momentarily to Florence. The pope, Julius II, who was still in alliance with the French, "was marching on Bologna at the head of an army to chase the Bentivoglio. That aim was rapidly achieved, and Bologna became sufficiently secure so that one could return to it : on November 11, 1506, Erasmus assisted at the triumphal entering of the bellicose pontiff"*.

Erasmus was on the scene, close to the decision makers at the moment of the decisive battle of the league of Cambrai: **Huizinga** (p. 119): *"By the end of 1508, Erasmus accepts the charge of professor of rhetoric's for the young Alexander Stewart, natural son of Jacques IV, king of Scotland, and who was already, in spite of his young age archbishop of Saint Andrews and pursuing his studies in Padua. The threat of war forced them to leave northern Italy for Siena. From there, Erasmus obtains free time to visit Rome. He will arrive in Rome in the early months of 1509 (thus before the battle of Agnadell), not as a small unknown monk coming from the northern regions, but as a celebrated author."*

Léon E. Halkin in his *"Erasme parmi nous"* writes (p. 110): *"The rivalry between Rome and Venice occupied also Erasmus thinking and his anxiety rises. He presented to cardinal Riario two memoranda on the subjects (which are lost ; K.V.). One opting for war, the other for peace."*

Huizinga: *" (...) In the month of July 1509 (when the "treason" of Julius II becomes evident for the world ; K.V.) he leaves Rome and Italy, to never come back again. (...) This time, it was not the inspiration of the Latin muses, who had offered him poetical meditations, full of art and filled with sentiment, on his past life and his devoted vows for the future; what was springing up was something far more subtle and immensely greater: [In praise of Folly]."*

Erasmus severely and repeatedly attacked the **earthly messianism** that motivated Julius II, and how, under the cover of love for antique authors, paganism was invading the Roman curia. One attributes also the very polemical *"Julius exclusus a coelis"* (Julius at which one refuses entry in heaven) to Erasmus, who was unhappy with its publication (since he was negotiating some new policy with Leo X) , but never contested expressly his paternity of the text. In this short dialogue, published in 1517, but written after the death of Julius II on February 21, 1513, we see Saint Peter, Julius II and his *"genius"* (because in the roman religion, every man had his *"genius"*, a subordinate divinity which takes care of him). Saint Peter keeps the gates of paradise closed for Julius II and sends him back on earth.

quote of Erasmus' "Julius to which one refuses entrance"

performed on stage in Paris, 1514;

Scene: Gate of Heaven.

(...) **Julius.** *Enough of this. I am Julius the Ligurian (from Genoa), P.M., as you can see by the letters if you can read.*

Peter. *P.M. ! What is that? Pestis Maxima (general plague) ?*

Genius. *Ha ha ha ! Our soothsayer has hit the nail on the head !*

Julius. *Pontifex Maximus (pope), you rascal.*

Peter. *If you are three times Maximus, and even if you are Mercury Trismegistus, you can't come in here unless you're Optimus (holy) too.*

Julius. *Impertinence ! You, who have been no more than Sanctus all these ages -and I Sactissimus, Sanctissimus Dominus, Sanctitas, Holiness itself, with Bulls to show it.*

Genius. *"Cock-and-bulls", you might say !*

Peter. *Is there no difference between being Holy and being called Holy ? Ask your flatterers who called you these fine names to give you admittance. Let me look at you a little closer. Hum ! Signs of impiety in plenty, and none of the other thing. Who are these fellows behind you ? Faugh ! They smell of stews, drink-shops, and gunpowder. Have you brought goblins out of Tartarus to make war with heaven ? Yourself, too, are not precisely an apostle. Priest's cassock and bloody armour below it, eyes savage, mouth insolent, forehead brazen, body scarred with sins all over, breath loaded with wine, health broken with debauchery. Ay, threaten as you will, I will tell you what you are for all your bold looks. You are Julius the Emperor come back from hell.*

(...) **Julius.** *Will you make an end to your talking and open the gates ? We will brake them down else. You see these followers of mine.*

Peter. *I see a lot of precious rogues, but they won't break in here.*

Julius. *Make an end, I say, or I will fling a thunderbolt at you. I will excommunicate you. I have done as much to kings before this. Here are the Bulls ready.*

Peter. *Thunderbolts ! Bulls ! I beseech you, we have no thunderbolts or Bulls from Christ.*

It seems to us that Julius II did not "betray" the League of Cambrai, but as an instrument of the Genovese oligarchy, used a revolutionary potential of history to serve his own design. Not only to take power himself, but to reunify the international oligarchy. Later, it will be the Venetian/Genovese group that will train the Fugger dynasty to control the Habsburg imperial war machine.

Webster Tarpley writes (p. 42): *"Venetian capacities to manipulate Charles V were formidable indeed. The emperor's bankers and intelligencers were the Fuggers of Augsburg, a banking house and a city that must be regarded as Venetian satellites, within a context of very heavy Venetian control of the cities of the Danube valley. Virtually every young male member of the Fugger family, and their colleagues the Welsers as well, was sent to Venice for a period of apprenticeship at the "Fondaco dei Tedeschi"(German Foundation). This was the case with Jacob Fugger the Rich. Venice was the pivot for Fugger metals trading, especially toward the East."*

As of 1513, when **Leo X** (Giovanni de' Medici) mounts on the papal throne after Julius II death, the Fugger banking house becomes the distribution agency (since sold in advance !) of the indulgences reestablished by Julius II to finance the building of his mausoleum and the reconstruction of Saint Peters basilica in Rome.

Michelet writes (p. 243): *"The two businesses (slave-trade and traffic of indulgences) started at the same moment, as soon as 1516, both run by the Fuggers and the archbishop of Mainz, general indulgences-collector, who was the mobile agent, principal influence for the electors of Charles V. (...) At the door of the church there stood the coffers and the counters, (...) the Fuggers, represented by their clerk. (...) For a hundred guilders a month, the archbishop had rented a man with the name of Tetzal, a powerful barker, famous for many mediocre edifying stories up to the point that Maximillian wanted to have him thrown in the river.*

(...) "Do you realize, you miserable creatures" he stated, "that this is only given to you for the reconstruction of Saint Peter? ...Until then...the relics of Saint Peter, Saint Paul and I do not even know how many other martyrs are handed over to the rain and the winds, to the hail; beaten, tarnished and dishonored"... "Hardened heart!" he screamed : "Please, a guilder, my son, to save me from the flame!... And you have it, that guilder ! and you don't give it !"

"When that didn't work, Tetzal, to catch up, would sell (with a more certain result) the pardon of sins to be made in the future: rapes, adulteries and incests to come. Moderated prices: polygamy went for only six ducats."

In exchange for that pivotal role to elect Charles V, Fugger will impose three conditions. Michelet: *"1° The Garibaldi of Genoa, the Welsers of Germany, and the other bankers, would only partake in the election by making down payments to the Fuggers, and would only lend through this intermediary; 2° Fugger would receive as a guaranty the promissory notes of Antwerp and Mechelen, paid themselves by the tolls on Zealand; 3° Fugger obtained from the city of Augsburg an embargo on loans to the French. He demanded of Margareth of Austria, an incredible measure, to prohibit the commercial agents of Antwerp to make money change for anybody in Germany. Astonishing measure that no city of the Netherlands would have supported. But the rising Antwerp, who was burying Gent and Brugge, and which started off the great vortexes of great maritime interests, felt an extreme need for reconciliation with the king of Spain and the Indies. The thing was supported. Fugger won the war with ease. The Genovese and the Nuremberg protested, but accepted the deal; they preferred to gain profit with him and to pay tribute to him, than to gain nothing at all."*

The life and work of Erasmus, representing the legacy of Cusa and real Platonism, against the triple alliance of Genoa, Venice and Habsburg and their policy for the reconstruction of a new neo-pagan roman empire, will be our permanent reference.

2. The extra-ordinary career of a venitian super spy, the "scourge of princes" Pietro Aretino (the aretine) 1492-1556

Banned by decision of the Counter-reformation and inscribed on the "Index Vaticanus" in 1559 at the same time as Erasmus, the political role of the Aretine (the one who comes from

Arezzo), with his real name Pietro Aretino, has been carefully dissimulated by presenting him as a simple pornographer creator of the first Italian "Kama Sutra". If one could compare the role of Agostino Chigi to the one of today American millionaire Mellon Scaife, Aretino resembles much more to the Edgar "Gay" Hoover of the XVIth century. Since it would be too laborious to develop his entire career, let's concentrate on the essentials.

After a stay in Perugia, where he is active around the workshop of **Pietro Vanuzzi** (Perugino) and workshop where he to all probability meets Raphael, Aretino goes to Rome where he lives in the residence of Agostino Chigi. After Chigi's death in 1520, Aretino becomes a feared pamphleteer, writing "*Pasquinades*", satirical writings which were deposited on the day of Saint Mark, on the mutilated bust of "*Pasquino*", close to the piazza Navone in Rome.

Loosing his protectors after the death of Chigi, and by the election of Leo X and the election of the rigorist Dutch **pope Adrian VI**, Aretino seeks refuge in Mantua to live at the court of the Marquis Federigo Gonzaga of which he becomes the favorite. Aretino, from his side prefers to develop friendship with the "*Great Devil*", leader of a mercenary militia, **Giovanni de' Medici**, alias Giovanni delle Bande Nere. Back in Rome after the death of Adrian VI, he's a militant for another Medici, which will be elected under the name of Clement VII. Aretino, which wants to get as rich as Pietro Bembo by cardinal nomination, gets irritated by Clement VII which ordains him only to "*Knight of Rhodes*" (an honorific pompous title without pension). Believing to be untouchable, Aretino will defend zealously two of his friends and will succeed in freeing them from prison: **Giulio Romano**, Raphael's pupil, which had drawn in pure Roman tradition an Italian "*Kama Sutra*", and **Marcantonio Raimondi**, who made engravings of them and gave wide circulation to them, at a time they were uniquely tolerated for private use, at the papal court. To top it all, Aretino will tease outrageously the pontifical power by signing sixteen "*Luxurious Sonnets*" which "*say crudely, with heavy sexual images, what a church destabilized by Luther cannot tolerate*". In early 1525, (three years before Castiglione) Aretino composes the "*Cortigiana*", an attack against the court and the powerful. In the night of July 28 of the same year he is knifed and left for dead, by a thug hired by Giberti, the counselor of the pope.

Healed, he is warmly welcomed in Venice, where he "*obtains the graces of the leaders of the Serenissima and the doge himself, which are out to dispose of his information and are interested in the polemical help that can bring to them, in exchange for their hospitality, the feared pen that the entire world will call from now on the "scourge of princes"*". In Venice, he lives in wealth and luxury surrounded by "*Aretines*" (prostitutes) at the splendid palace Bolani on the Grand Canal. He will live in close friendship with **Titian**, which will make several portraits of Aretino, and the sculptor and architect **Jacopo Sansovino**.

More than the "*Erotical Sonnets*", it is the active corruption tactics of Aretino which make him so feared. But his technique is very simple: claiming to be the "*secretary of the world*", he writes to all the great leaders, writers and artists of his time: dukes, kings, bishops, cardinals, Medicis, François I, Charles V, and Michelangelo. He writes them flattering elegies, fondling the sense of pride of his victims. The great men, seeing in Aretino a connection to Agostino Chigi and the oligarchy in general, give him consideration and sometimes a fatal appointment. Then, Aretino, bon vivant and incomparable joker and storyteller pulls them into planned debaucheries. Afterwards, having been the witness of the sins of the "*elite's*", he submits them to

his political and financial blackmail. Those who try to resist expose themselves to his denunciations by the publication in Venice at regular intervals of Aretino's correspondence. The nearly 2000 letters, of which he kept a copy, published in 1537, 1542, 1544, 1550 and posthumous in 1557, will become a real best-seller of his times offering an occasion for the larger public to penetrate in the backstage of the power structure of the epoch. Recognized as an institutional representative of Venetian power, the great men are anyway obliged to deal with him. Through that gimmick, Aretino obtains in 1533 from the French King François I a splendid golden chain and in 1543, Charles V is obliged to let him ride on his right side with him, while he pays another golden chain to Titian. Ten years later, while Aretino travels to Rome, pope Julius III embraces him in public, while refusing him a cardinal's hat.

All of Aretino's comedies, which under cover of denunciations are overwhelmingly immoral, offer in reality Venice's counterattack against Erasmus, whose works Aretino is following day by day. When Erasmus "Elegy of wedding" appears in Venice in 1526, Aretino will write "The Marshall". The intrigue is very simple. The duke orders his field Marshall to marry a young woman with a substantial dowry. Being a homosexual, the field Marshall refuses, but the duke forces him to marry his promised bride, which is in reality nothing else than a page transvestited into a young woman, and the field Marshall reassured is happy for not having married a woman. While Erasmus shows in his Colloquy "*The young man and the prostitute*" of 1523 how to pull the prostitutes out of their hell, Aretino gives them the crown of honesty: "*Honesty*", says his heroine la Nanna, is "*beautiful in the bordello*". The world historically famous painter, sculptor, and art history writer Giorgio Vasari will be convoked by Aretino in Venice to be his stage-maker for all his plays.

La Nanna, is nobody else than Aretino himself in his "*Ragionamento*". She is the success whore, the one who states concerning mankind "it is the prick that makes us and undoes us". Preoccupied by the career of her daughter la Pippa, she relates to the miserable whore Antonia her own misadventures in the realms of nuns, spouses and prostitutes in order to make decide the future of her progeniture. La Nanna, is the macrelle (the too old prostitute who runs the bordello) for who the chastity of women is as fragile and as miraculous as "*a glass falling without breaking*". Conclusion: "*My advice is that you make your daughter a whore, the nun betraying her vows and the married woman assassinating the sacrament of wedding; while the whore doesn't deceive neither monastery neither husband. On the contrary, she is in the image of the soldier paid to do the evil and, doing so, isn't blamed for it, since her shop sells what it has to sell*".

Only his last comedy, "*The Philosopher*" of 1546 pertains no reference to the questions of the day. Composed as a pastiche of a story of the "*Decamerone*", the principal figure is the merchant Boccaccio, victim of the world of Shadows, while the philosopher **Plataristoteles** (contraction of Plato and Aristotle) sees his spouse emancipating herself by taking a lover. Morality: nature, "*which is more located in between the thighs than in between things*", is superior to all philosophy.

In 1555, a medal announces openly this link between Sex and Truth. On the front side a portrait of Aretino's profile. On its backside, we see the reverse profile of a satyr of which neck, hair and face is composed of erected phalluses. This representation is ornamented with a neo-

Platonic parmenidian saying: "*Totus in toto et totus in qualib parte*" (Everything is in all and all is in everything) Definitely, Sigmund Freud did invent very little.

Aretino will be always on top of the latest operations of the oligarchy. But that oligarchy will enter a state of panic. In effect, the discovery of the new world will shatter those days geopolitics and create upheaval inside the oligarchic establishment: on the one side those who want to stay eternally in Venice, in spite of the league of Cambrai's proof of Venice's physical vulnerability, called "*il veccio*" (the elder) as at the time of the roman empire, where the Mediterranean sea, the "*mare nostrum*", is considered the center of the world. On the other side, there are "*il nuovo*" (the young wolves) who want to "*move Venice*" to the north. Their strategy will be the seizing of total control over the spanish Habsburg power structure, and on the other side by making Antwerp, London and Amsterdam the new centers of oligarchic power; the ideal being Henry VIII's England, because situated as an Atlantic bridge between the old world and the new one.

Bertrand Levergeois in "*L'Aretin, ou l'insolence du plaisir*" writes (p. 117): "*The city of the lagoon has quite some advantages, thanks to its inborn sens of statesmanship, its seven centuries of independence, without taking into account its one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants which make Venice the third city of Europe in terms of population, after Paris and Naples. But on the military flank, the Serenissime is two foldly threatened: on the east by the Turks, and even in Italy where envious powers are rising. On may 14, 1509, the disaster of Agnadel in face of the League of Cambrai, bringing together France, Spain and Austria, nearly brought the end of its power, while underlining the muscle of its army and the intelligence of its diplomats. The republic is also economically bypassed: in 1501 Lisbon succeeds to import its first load of pepper without crossing the Mediterranean Sea -- from there, the project to cut the Isthmus of Suez. Over more, gold is flowing from the Americas: on top of the Ottoman competition, the Lion of Saint Mark has to keep in check the Spanish. In brief, the flourishing XVth century of the Serenissime, where the doge Tomaso Mocenigo could pride himself of making forty percent profit on any venetian investments, that era, in spite of the rising industrial production (textile, glass, mirrors, wood, wool and leather) and the agricultural production on the firm shores, that era is not any more*".

Aretino, by himself alone, expresses this oligarchic reorientation, because as a good polysexual, suffering from acute priapism, he will have two daughters: one gets the name of "*Adria*" (as Adriatic Sea) and the other gets the name of "*Austria*" (as the Austro-German empire)!

To conclude this short sketch with a last example: when pope Clement VII, a Medici, refuses to dance on venetian music and crown Charles V holy roman emperor, Aretino, as by magic is able to predict the coming sacking of Rome. Early 1527, the "*Pronostic of Master Pasquino, fifth evangelist for the year 1527*" announces the coming end of Rome. A useful leak giving a chance to all the Venetian agents stationed in Rome to make their luggage and get out in time as it was the case for Pietro Bembo, and Aretino himself who left Mantua on March 25, 1527. On May 6, 1527, the imperial troops of Habsburg took Rome and massacred 6000 civilians. Entrenched in Castel Angelo, and driven with his back against the wall by the events, Clement VII will crown Charles V holy roman emperor in 1530.

3. Culture in service of earthly messianism: Orpheus, Apollo, neo-Platonism, petrarquism, bembism and mannerism.

The destruction of the Christian humanist tradition so perfectly incarnated by Nicholas of Cusa and his friends appears rapidly after their death. The "Delphic" method is universally applied: take the outside form of a metaphor, as an object in itself and substitute its content by another content, generally by a symbolical interpretation, reserved to an elite of "cognoscenti", the grand priests of knowledge. The same goes for **Florentine Platonism**. By insisting on the orphic and Zoroastrian influences on Plato, and since Plato was officially esteemed by Cusa as being compatible with Christendom, Christianity became for these interpreters the logical continuation of orphism!

Hence, after **Gemistus Plethon** inspiring speech at the Council of Florence, Cosimo de Medici ordered John Argyropoulos to translate Aristotle, and Marsilio Ficino to translate Plato and Trismegistus. Two years before his death in 1464, Cosimo gave Ficino the manuscripts, a pension to live with and the famous villa at Careggi, close to Florence, which became the "Platonic Academy".

André Chastel writes in "Marsil Ficin et l'Art": *"The fashion of neo-Platonism flowered on the picturesque background and slight exoticism of which Florentine art was never so much in love with as in the times of Gozzoli and the beginnings of Botticelli. That fashion restored Hellenism, uplifted to "magical" prestige which gives western culture, under Plato's impetus its Oriental share. It is as the enlightened propagator of islamo-greek science that one admires Cosimo: and the "prophet" that would have converted him to Platonism, Gemistus Pletho, was a strange and impressive personality: while visiting sultan Bajazet, he would have discovered Islam and overtaken from the Muslims the veneration for Zoroaster which he transmitted to Ficino. Ficino will address his whole career impure and late Hellenic sources, and will celebrate without moderation the science of Hermes Trismegistus and put together into one ambiguous assembly the magnificent names of Egypt and Persia with those of Greece and Christianity. Hence, the Academy has its place in what has been sometimes called "the oriental feast" of the Florentine renaissance."*

"In the background of these speculations rises some kind of paradise of knowledge for which the gardens of Careggi could appear, in the beauty of the landscapes of Tuscany, as the earthly incarnations: "laetus in praeses". The soul conceives his capacity to rejoice that assures him already from here below his original purity and ideal requirements: one could say that, already in a Goethean spirit, the new wises do nothing but dream consciously and religiously their progress and metamorphosis. The apparatus of sciences and doctrines is resumed into symbols, and the music excites to contemplation which brings about a superior humanity. Without being a real esoterical society, the hermetic character of the Academy guaranteed part of its standing. The group was limited to the personnel friends of Ficino, which supervised the moral quality as much as the literary: "One has to associate Jupiter and Mercury": philosophical initiation, becoming a kind of erudite game, harmonized with the need for singularity and distinction so powerful for the Florentines."

Marsilio Ficino, in his *"Platonic Theology"* (a title he plagiarized from Proclus) talks much about the "vacata mentis" where the soul undoes its corporeal attachments. Seven species of situations permit that state: *"by sleep, by syncope (fainting), by melancholical humour, by equilibrated temperament, by solitude, by astonishment and by chastity"*. The first illustrates itself in particular by Orpheus hymn to sleep, the second by Hercules, the third by Socrates, the fourth by Plotinus, the fifth by Zoroaster, the sixth by Pithy etc. And everything presented to the soul by obedience or the relative extinction of the soul, proves her invincible power: *"pulled back on herself, she participates in the celestial realms and divine providence"*. Ficino is so overwhelmed by this hermetism that he convinces himself to be Orpheus reincarnated on earth.

Chastel, (p. 56): *"I thought Orpheus was returned on earth" says Lorenzo (de' Medici) in his book "L'Altercazione", when the reverend (Ficino) appeared playing his lyre. Developing the same theme, Naldi shows in a short poem how, by a succession of metamorphoses, the soul of Orpheus went successively through Homer, Pythagoras and Ennius up to Ficino. One gets a better grasp of the value given to the symbol of the lyre and the image of Orpheus; it is not solely a treat of humanist preciousness destined to the group of familiars. In the proper and figured sense, Ficino, armed with his lyres, was really the new Orpheus"*.

This *"Orphical"* reinterpretation of Petrarch and Dante, will become the preferred sport of the "literati" under venetian influence. The reading of Ovidius had revived the tale of Orpheus, who painfully stricken by the loss of his beloved Eurydice, descends into hell to try to exfiltrate her.

In the second book of the *"Metamorphoses"*, Ovidius writes (p. 253): *"And while pulling the strings of his lyre to accompany his song, he says: Oh divinities of the underground world where we all end up, we creatures obedient to death, if I can and with your permission let me tell you straightforwardly and frankly the truth: it is not my desire to see the umbrageous tartar which led me to undertake this descent, neither the desire to chain up the triple troth (?), hared like a serpent, of the monster of the race of the Medusa. The raison for my voyage is my wife; a snake which she betreated has pumped venom in her veins which interrupted the course of her years. I wanted to find the strength to support that loss, and do not deny of having tried: but Love prevailed. This God is well known up here on earth. Is he down here in your reign? I ignore that, but I suppose he also is; and if the rumor of the rapture of the old days is not a lie, it is Love that unites you."*

" (...) While he talked this way, and pulled the strings of his lyre at the rhythm of his words, the bloodless souls cried: Tantalus stopped trying to reach the water that was running away from him, the wheel of Ixion halted, the birds ceased gnawing the liver of their victims, (...) Neither the royal spouse nor the god who reigns in the hells had the heart to oppose a refusal to his prayer; and they called Eurydice (...) Orpheus, the songster of Rhodope, gets her back on the following condition, that he will not look back till he left the valleys of Avern; if not, the favor he obtained will be nullified.(...)"

In this environment, **Politian** (Angelo Poliziano) (1454-1494), student of Ficino and friend of Lorenzo de Medici will compose his drama *"The fable of Orpheus"* in 1471, the same

year that Ficino puts to press the "*Corpus Hermeticum*" and its addendum, the "*Asclepius*" of Hermes Trismegistus (meaning Mercury/Jupiter the Very Good Very Great), which he finished translating at the demand of Cosimo the Medici. In the dedication, Ficino, referring to Saint-Augustine, makes Trismegistus the first of all theologians: his teaching would have been transmitted successively to Orpheus, to Aglaophemus, to Pythagoras, to Philolaos and finally to Plato. Then, Ficino places Zoroaster at the head of these "*prisce theologi*" (first theologians), to finally attribute to Zoroaster and Mercury an identical role in the genesis of antique wisdom: Zoroaster teaches this wisdom to the Persians while Trismegistus teaches it to the Egyptians.

The fact that Ficino as since the beginning in contact with the Venetian "*magicians*" appears clearly in his dedication of his "*Quid sit lumen*" of 1476: "*What the light is in the body of the world, in the soul and in God by Marsilio Ficino, Florentine, to the very illustrious venetian ambassador Phoebus (Phoebus Capella, ambassador of Venice in Florence and friend of Ficino associated to the "Plato" translation project ; K.V.) -- Salute to you, our Phoebus, always in the light of life. Salute to you, celestial Phoebus, of which the illustrious light doesn't come from the outside, but glares from the depths of thyself. These last days, the spirit of thy Marsilio, fecundated to the degree of his forces by the rays of the Platonic Sun as by seeds, forced himself to give birth to the sun and, to unfortunate, I don't know by what weakness of sterile nature, bearded in stead of the sun, the moon with borrowed light. Also, for that this obscure fruit of the Platonic Sun born out of my darkness be illuminated with its rays, I will dedicate it without waiting to Plato's "Phedon". For of you, illustrious Phoebus, accept with good hart these things which are rightfully yours, and I pray you to light them up with the light of thy spirit. Glory and Happiness to thine divine senate, illustrious letters, our salute to the Venetian, or rather Florentine, Bernardo Bembo (Venetian ambassador to Venice before Capella), with the affection of our people.*"

Bernardo Bembo, great Venetian patrician and ambassador of the Serenissime to Florence was a regular attendant of Ficino's Academy, and spent the money to pay for the restoration of Dante's tomb in Ravenna. Dante's "*Divine Comedy*" can be seen as a polemical, christianized rewriting of the Orpheus tale, which the Venetian tried to reimpose. Bernardo's son, **Pietro Bembo** (1474-1547) will be the founder of "*Petrarquism*", known during these days as "*Bembism*". The Pre-Romantical existentialist separation of intellect and sentiment, which Schiller will blast in all his works, resulted out of the symbolical misinterpretation of Petrarch, supposedly agonizing between moral principles dictated by the works of Saint Augustine and the enslaving sentiment of love for Laura. The personality split based on that dilemma will be the basic subject for romanticism and will justify all immoralities. Since love escapes all logic and reason, nothing limit of reason can restrain it. In the domain of artistical expression, this separation will express itself by the cult of the form at the expense of the meaning. For that, nothing better then the flat symbolical art of the Botticelli-type.

It is for those reasons that **Antonio Pinelli**, in his "*La Belle Manière*" (p. 191) considers Pietro Bembo as the intellectual founder of Mannerism: "*By drawing a parallel between mannerism and Pietro Bembo, Shearman has pointed without any doubt to the neuralgic point of the cross influence between plastical arts and literature of the XVIth century. Neo-Platonic in his "Asolani" (1505), Ciceronian in "De imitatione" (1512), Petrarquist in his "Rime" (published in 1530) and defender of the daily life language in the "Prose della volgar lingua" (1525), of a*

literary language which had nothing of the daily inflections of every days language, but nourished itself essentially of the imitation of the "best" -- specifically and essentially Petrarch for poetry and Boccaccio for prose --, cardinal Bembo is a flag bearer for a literary current of the Cinquocento, Bembism, which has as European equivalents the representatives of la Pléiade in France, English euphuism (?) and other similar currents. By fixing as an objective the elaboration of a literary language that can "support the comparison" with the antique language, dispute its elegance, its lexical treasures, its variety and its richness of form, Pietro Bembo, and even more his successors end up by making the word the supreme idol, and of style -- real meaning of manner -- their unique preoccupation and their single obsession. So farfetched was this exercise that they arrived, in its extreme manifestations, at some sort of "Asiatic literary style", redundant and sophisticated, which brings along an inversion of the "classical" relation between the form and the content..."

J.H. Plum in *"Woman of the Renaissance"* describes (p. 350) accurately that pseudo-platonic hypocrisy; *"Pietro Bembo was a Venetian nobleman, the cultivated son of a rich and sophisticated father who had educated him in the height of humanist fashion at the University of Ferrare, where he acquired extreme agility in bandying about the high-flown concepts of that strange mixture of Platonism and Christianity which was the hallmark of the exquisite. Petrarch, of course, was Bembo's mentor, and like Petrarch he lived his life, as far as the pressures of nature would allow him, in literary terms. He fell verbosely and unhappily in love with a Venetian girl; his ardent longings and intolerable frustrations were committed elegantly to paper and circulated to his admiring friends. This experience provided him with enough material for a long epistolary exchange with Ercole Strozzi, who was as addicted as Bembo to girls in literary dress. Enraptured by the elegance of his sentiments, Strozzi invited Bembo to his villa near Ferrara, doubtless to flaunt his latest capture, Lucrezia Borgia, as well as to indulge his insatiable literary appetite. However, the biter was quickly bitten, for Bembo was just Lucrezia's cup of tea. A mature woman of twenty-two, thoroughly versed in the language as well as the experience of love, she was already bored with her husband, Alfonso d'Este, and tired of Strozzi. Soon she and Bembo were exchanging charming Spanish love lyrics and far larger homilies on aesthetics."*

" (...) Neither of course, was so stupid as to think that even the high-minded Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus or Elisabeth Gonzaga of Urbino could live by words alone, and Bembo, at least, always interlarded the more ethereal descriptions of Platonic love with a warm eulogy of passion in its more prosaic and energetic aspects. Indeed, he was not above appearing (not entirely modestly disguised) as an ambassador of Venus, in order to declaim in favor of natural love. After six years of this excessively cultured refinement at Urbino, Bembo became papal secretary to Leo X in Rome. Appropriately, at Rome the word became flesh, and Bembo settled in the comfortable arms of a girl called Morosina who promptly provided him with three children. It is not surprising therefore, that Bembo's interests became more mundane, turning from Platonic philosophy to the history of Venice. After the death of his mistress, the life of the spirit once more claimed him, and he entered the College of Cardinals in 1538. More than any other man of his time, he set the pattern of elegant courtship, so that the flattery of the mind, combined with poetic effusions on the supremacy of the spirit, became a well-trodden path for the courtier. It possessed the supreme advantage of passionate courtship, when the object was both a bluestocking and a queen."

Clouas shows (p. 164) that Bembo, before becoming one of the secretaries of Leo X, got the favors of Julius II: *"Between the humanists, Julius II had special affection for Sigismondo de Conti, who gave us a chronicle of his pontificate; particular secretary of the pope, Sigismondo will also be the provost of Saint Peters church vestry, and at that post in contact with Raphael who will paint for him the "Madonna de Foligno" where he is represented as the donator. The pontifical secretary also organized also meetings for his friends at his house on mount Janicule (in Rome): there he met his colleagues employed at the office of the pontifical secretary, Jacques Sadolet, which the pope nominated canon of San Lorenzo, and also Pietro Bembo, who received a large prebend in Bologna."*

At the early age of twenty, Bembo had learned Latin, spoke Florentine and applied learning greek from the celebrated Hellenist Constantine Lascaris. Back in Venice in 1494, he joins his father Bernardo Bembo in Ferrare where the latter was on a mission for Venice and Pietro will stay with him till 1505. He works on the reediting of Petrarch's poetry which will be published in 1501 by the famous Venetian printer Aldus Manutius (Alde Manuce), the man in charge for the Venetians to keep hands on top of the new medium and close to the family of Pico della Mirandola. Erasmus, writer that the Venetians thought they could buy and recuperate since he showed his love for the authors of Antiquity will publish at Alde Manuce's printing shop, his "Adagios" and will meet and work on the Greek language with John Lascaris.

Later, and also because Erasmus was negotiating with pope Leo X the publication of his "New Testament", Pietro Bembo will be discretely the target of Erasmus dialogue *"The Ciceronian or on the best species of eloquence"* (1528). Ciceronians was the generical name for Bembism: for them the only authorized form of expression was a pedantic imitation of Cicerons language and any word not appearing in Cicero was outlawed. Erasmus gets more and angrier against the ciceronians, notably because one of his students, Christophe de Longueuil became a follower of the ciceronian sect at the roman academy and became a *"roman citizen"* in 1519.

Excerpt of Erasmus "Ciceronian or the best eloquency"

Bulephorus (always giving advice): *then, do you think the world as it is now has anything in common with the situation at the time when Cicero lived and delivered his speeches ? Everything has been completely altered - religion, empire, government, constitution, law, customs, pursuits, even men's physical appearance.*

Nosoponus (the sick): *Yes, indeed.*

Bulephorus: *What effrontery then on the part on anyone to demand that we speak in a totally Ciceronian manner ! He must first give us back the Rome of long ago, the senate and the curia, the conscript fathers, the equestrian order, the people distributed into tribes and centuries, he must restore the colleges of augurs and haruspices, the pontifices maximi, the flamens and vestals, the aediles, praetors, tribunes of the people, consuls, dictators, Caesars, the voting in the comitium, the laws, the decrees of the senate, the resolutions of the people, the statues, triumphs, ovations, the supplications, the temples and shrines, the feasts of couches, the religious rites, the gods and goddesses, the Capitol and the sacred fire; he must restore the provinces, colonies, municipalities and allies of the city that was mistress of the world. Since the entire scene of*

human activity has been transformed, the only speaker who can respond to it appropriately is one who is very different from Cicero. (...)

Suppose I have to give an address to a mixed audience including young girls, married women, and widows ; my subjects are the values of fasting, penitence, the effectiveness of prayer, the benefit of almsgiving, the sanctity of marriage, the contempt for the transient world, zeal for the Holy Scriptures. What help will Cicero's eloquence be to me here? The subjects I have to speak about were unknown to him, so he could not have employed the words for them: they came in after his time as new words express new ideas. If our orator tacks patches filched from Cicero on to this sort of subject, his speech will surely fall completely flat.

I'll tell you a story - not a bit of hearsay, but something I saw with my own eyes, heard with my own ears. In Rome at the time the two men with the most distinguished reputation as speakers were Pietre Fedra [Thomas Fedra Inghirami, chief librarian of the Vatican] and Camillo. Camillo was younger and in actuality the more powerful speaker, but the older man had occupied the citadel first. Neither of them though, unless I'm mistaken, was actually Roman by birth. Now a certain person had been appointed to speak on the death of Christ, on the holy day known as the Day of Parasceve (Friday , April 6, 1509), in the presence of the pontiff himself. A few days before the event I received an invitation from the literary community to go and hear the spec. 'Be sure to be there,' they said. 'Now you will really hear how the language of Rome sounds in the mouths of a Roman.' I was there, full of expectation. I stood as close to the platform as I could, so as to miss nothing. Julius II was present himself, and that doesn't happen very often, because of his health, I think. There were rows of cardinals and bishops and, besides the common crowd, quite a number of scholars who were staying in Rome. I won't tell you the name of the speaker (Inghirami), then no one will think it my intention to damage the reputation of an honest scholar. He held the same view as you do, Nosoponus, that is, he was an aspirant after Ciceronian eloquence. His preface and his peroration –which was almost longer than his entire speech-- were taken up with singing the praises of Julius II, whom he called Jupiter (=Hermes) Optimus Maximus (=Trismegistus, or maximal good, maximal greatness), describing him as grasping and hurling with his omnipotent right hand the three-forked unerring thunderbolt and with a mere nod performing whatever is his will. All that had been done in the preceding years in France, Germany, and Spain, in Portugal, Africa, and Greece had come about, he maintained, by the nod of his will and his alone. In all of which to be sure, he spoke as a Roman in Rome, using Roman speech and a Roman accent. But what had all this to do with Julius as the high priest of the Christian religion, the vicar of Christ and the successor of Peter and Paul? What had it to do with the cardinals and bishops who act in the stead of other apostles?

(...)

Boulephoros: *(...) What is our aspirant after the Ciceronian turn of phrase going to do here ? Is he going to say nothing, or is he going to make the kind of substitution I've suggested for established Christian vocabulary ?*

Nosoponus: *And why shouldn't he ?*

Bulephorus: *Very well, let's invent an example: Jesus Christ, the Word and the Son of the eternal Father, according to the prophets came into the world, and having been made a man, of his own free will surrendered himself to death and redeemed his church; he turned aside from us the wrath of the Father whom we had offended, and reconciled us to him so that, being justified by the grace of faith and delivered from tyranny, we might be ingrafted into the church, and persevering in the communion of the church, might after this life attain the kingdom of heaven.*

The Ciceronian will express it like this: The interpreter and son of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, our preserver and king, according to the oracles and the seers winged his way from Olympus to the earth and, assuming the shape of man, of his own free will consigned himself to the spirits of the dead to preserve the republic; and thus asserting the freedom of his assembly or state or republic, quenched the thunderbolt of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, directed at our heads, and renewed our good relations with him, in order that, being restored to innocence by the generous gift of our persuasion, and manumitted from the lordship of the denouncer, we might be co-opted into citizenship of the state and, persevering in the society of the republic, might, once the fates summon us to depart this life, achieve the sum total of all things, in the company of the gods.

(...)

Bulephorus : *It is Paganism, believe me, Nosoponus, sheer paganism, that makes our ears and minds accept such an idea. The fact is we're Christians only in name. Our bodies may have been dipped in the holmy water, but our minds are unbaptized. The sign of the cross may have been put on our brows, but the cross itself is repudiated by the mind within. We have Jesus on our lips, but it's Jupiter Optimus Maximus and Romulus that we have in our hearts."*

In **1529**, in order to help a young student, Erasmus sends to Rome a letter of recommendation from him adressed to **Bembo**. Often interpreted as a proof of their good relationship, the introduction of the letter possesses a fine irony: *"Basle, February 22, 1529. Thousand salutes. I have been freed of a heavy anxiety, when a letter of the reverend bishop Jacques Sadolet learned me lately that, far before the beginning of the hurricane which hit Rome (the sac of Rome of may 1525), you found refuge at Padua as in a tranquil harbor and that you pleased yourself in the middle of Muses of a distraction as perfectly honorable as agreeable."*

In **1530**, when pope **Clement VII** finally accepted to crown **Charles V** emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Venice by decision of the **Council of Ten** (the highest deciding body) will reward Bembo for his loyal services by making him the official historiographer of the Venetian Republic, which he will write (in Latin, of course) as *"Rerum venetarum historia"*. Erasmus, on his side, will refuse the title of cardinal which was proposed to him (to spoil him) by (counter-reformation) pope **Paul III** in **1535** and will be violently attacked by **Julius César Scaliger** (1484-1558) in his *"Orationes duae adversus Desiderium Erasmus eloquentiae romanae vindices"* (1536). As of 1543, Erasmus works will be burned by the executioner of Milan before suffering total banning by the *"Index Vaticanus"* in 1559.

Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529), other close friend of Raphael, will be nothing less than a mediocre imitator of Bembo. His portrait, which one thinks was painted by Rafael, shows us a courtier dressed identically as Pietro Aretino in the engraving of his portrait by Marcantonio Raimondi. The question arises here if the Castiglione portrait isn't in reality a portrait of Aretino? Castiglione's famous book *"The Courtier"* (1528) is entirely constructed with borrowings of Cicero and Bembo, and Bembo appears in the dialogue as the defender of *"Love"* according to Ficino.

Alain Pons, in his introduction to the French edition of the *"Livre du Courtisan"* writes: *"Castiglione goes far beyond Machiavelli for whom the sum of good and evil remains equal in the world. For him, if there exists more good in the world today, there is also more evil. Every good that exists does so for his contrary, and by willing to make disappear the vices, one makes disappear the virtues" (...)* *"And is not by chance that the anecdote of the Greek painter Zeuxis, choosing five girls of Crotona to make of them all one single figure of perfect beauty" is reported in the "Courtier" (I, LIII), and was on the other hand, during the entire XVIth century, at the center of the esthetical debate about the concepts of "imitatio" and "electio". Let us not forget that it was to Castiglione that Raphael wrote the famous letter, dated 1514, and so often quoted: "I tell you to paint a beautiful woman, I would need to see many of them, and on the condition that you help me in that choice; but since there is a shortage of good judges and beautiful woman, I employ a certain idea which comes to my mind. If that idea has a certain artistic excellence, I don't know; I have already enough difficulty to obtain it".*

It was of course Aretino who published that letter !

Alain Pons identifies correctly Castiglione as the norm bearer of Mannerism: *"Castiglioni's rhetoric will be that of the court, of court life. His dimension is not the one of the people or of tribunals, but the space of the network building of courtier relations between them and their Prince".*

The exquisite quality of good manners is to possess grace. One obtains it at once, by being born aristocrat: Castiglione (I, XXVI) : *"But I have often thought about the origin of that grace, and, and outside of those who got it by heaven, I think there is a very universal rule, which I think applies to all human affairs that one does or says, that is one must avoid, as much as possible, as a sharp and dangerous reef, the affectation, and, maybe to use as new word, to prove and show in all manners a certain unselfconsciousness (sprezzatura), which hides artifice and shows that everything one does and says came without effort and nearly without thinking about it".*

Alain Pons : *"By forging the word [sprezzatura], Castiglione assured the glory of his book and the despair of the translators. (...) The etymology of [sprezzatura] suggests clearly the intentions of Castiglione. It indicates depreciation, disdain, despise. Despise is the aristocratic sentiment by excellence. Those who are noble despise [the ignoble] (disgraceful). Or what is the ignoble ? It is that what falls short by default, the brutally natural and neglected, without bearing. But it also that what falls short by excess, by too much care, too much diligence, work and study; in short by too much artifice. Sprezzatura is so defined an attitude to achieve [juste milieu], [mediocrity] in the primitive sense of the word".*

Miguel de Cervantes, an author educated by the erasmian Juan Lopez de Hoyos in Madrid, wrote the *"Don Quichote"* as a platonic dialogue between the spirit separated from his body (Don Quichote), and the body separated from the mind (Sancho Panza) as a polemical attack on bembist petrarchism and against Castiglioni's *"Courtier"* and his chivalric ideal.

4. Chigi, Aretino and Raphael

Bertrand Levergeois established first that Aretino was the "creature" of Chigi (p. 56): *"If he (Aretino) was lacking fortune, it is again to serve the legend as to imagine that he came by foot to the eternal city (Rome), without anything in his bag then his clothes. After all, is the man waiting for him not the wealthy Sienese banker Agostino Chigi who will become his protector ? Chigi is the wealthiest affairist of his epoch, emperor of banking, not in Italy alone but in the entirety of Europe. And his palace at the piazza Colonna, this "merchant" as Pietro calls him, lives a wealthy life and the young man, with his compilation of poems as only letters patent of nobility, can nothing but hope everything from him. Humility, certainly but of short time span since Chigi, by his magnificences, makes him forget rapidly his origins and scruples".*

"This treasurer of the church creates around him an atmosphere of ostentation. For example, he is hardly astonished of the stealing of pieces of the plates and dishes during the sumptuous banquets he has the habit organizing. In April 1518, during one of these where are invited in great pomp the pope, fourteen cardinals and all the embassies represented in Rome, eleven dishes disappear without him getting disturbed. It is true that Chigi possesses the art to amaze people. In the summer of the same year, when every table of his guests gets cleared, Chigi orders the dishes to be thrown negligently into the river Tiber -- but fine threads were set up under the water level to recuperate these dishes insolently "lost". One year later, at his wedding, all the guests (including the pope and the cardinals) find their silver dishes ornated, for the sole occasion, with the armories of their family. Such a climate is a sign of high culture."

"Also, after the Perugine fraternization of which Pietro got some taste, Pietro discovers in Chigi a "master for his life" of which he affirms being the "disciple". De facto, he is treated as a next of kin, and not as a servant of the family, although his precise function to the financier is unknown. But he is undoubtedly his protege, his "creature" and like others during that period, one of the men of spirit and heart at his side that plays the role of courtier and secretary. It is near these virtuosi that he achieves his perugine education. He meets regularly the most prestigious painters of the times: Sebastiano del Piombo (v.1485-1547), Raphael Sanzio, Giulio Romano (1492?-1546), Giovanni da Udine (1487-1564), Giovan Francesco Penni (v.1488-1528) and Sodoma (1477-1549), all on their turn settle down to the decoration of the magnificent villa that Chigi orders to be build at the gates of Rome by Baldassare Peruzzi: the very famous "Farnesina". Some of them will also work on the not less famous "Villa Madame" (for Julius II), grandiose project that will never be terminated".

We know from other sources that in 1501 Chigi called Pietro Vanucci ("Perugino", master of Raphael) *"è il meglio maestro d'Italia"* (one of the best masters of Italy). Chigi, to impose his cultural project seems to have drawn on the Perugia breeding ground, and Aretino, who was a self-proclaimed artist who never made a single painting, will be his recruiting agent on the site, deploying his homosexual activity. It is thought of that Aretino stayed several years in Perugia and came regularly to the Perugino's workshop.

That Aretino could have been Raphaels "controller" is hinted for by several authors: **John Pope-Hennessy** in his *"Raphael"* writes (p. 30): *"In Rome Leonardo Sellaio joyfully reported that Raphael's newly disclosed frescoes in the Villa Farnesina were "chosa vituperosa a un gran maestro" (despicable thing for a great master) even worse than his last frescoes in the Vatican. Years later when Condivi, in his life of Michelangelo, wished to offer decisive proof of his hero's*

generosity, his way of doing so was to declare that Michelangelo habitually spoke well of all his rivals, "even of Raphael of Urbino". Raphael and his supporters were well able to defend themselves. Told about the drawings sent to Sebastiano del Piombo, Raphael, in conversation with Piero Aretino, declared himself delighted, since his victory would be over Michelangelo. His pupils too were ready to fight back, as the painter Rosso discovered in Rome when he was threatened with assassination for criticizing Raphael's work. Years later, Michelangelo's apologists admitted only that there had been "qualche contesa nella pittura" between him and Raphael".

"Part of the trouble was personal. Of the two artists it was Raphael who enjoyed the greater worldly success. After the disclosure of the Sistine Ceiling in 1512, Michelangelo, in a state of mounting tension, was occupied with the Julius tomb, pressed for money and from time to time accused of misappropriating funds, while Raphael (as we learn from Pietro Aretino, to whom he habitually showed his paintings before he revealed them to the outside world) was living "like a prince rather than a private person, bestowing his virtues and his money liberally on all those students of the arts who might have need of them". He was the chief architect of St. Peter's, was in charge of the recuperation of antiquities, and at his death was thought, rightly or wrongly, to have a cardinalate in the bag. "Beside the excellence of his painting", says Aretino, "Raphael had every virtue and every grace that is appropriate to a gentleman."

Even **Bertrand Levergeois** wonders (p. 57): *"In relationship with the elite of the arts and also maybe with Michelangelo (born in Caprese, not far away from Arezzo), Pietro increases his pictorial knowledge so far and so good that he will not hesitate later on to call himself the adviser of all of them, since he declared without shame that he is "not blind in the art of painting". Do we have to believe his friend Ludovico Dolce, who says in his "Dialogue on painting" (1557), that Aretino had so much influence in Rome that Raphael never would have shown a painting to the public without consulting him ? Maybe not"*.

John Pope-Hennessy (p. 32) : *"Had drawings for the Sistine Ceiling survived in the same numbers as drawings for the frescoes in the "Stanze", it might transpire that the creative procedure of the two artists at the time they were in competition was more uniform than Michelangelo would have us think. Yet for contemporaries the difference between them was real enough, as can be seen from the classical apology for Raphael. Written by Lodovico Dolce, it appeared in Venice in 1557, seven years after the publication of the first edition of Vasari's "Lives" and eleven years before the publication of the second, and its protagonist was that formidable figure Pietro Aretino. Aretino is supplied with a sparring partner in the person of a certain Giovanni Francesco Fabrini, into whose mouth is put the Vasarian view of the supremacy of Michelangelo. Fabrini attacks at once. 'No one', he says, "who has seen the divine Michelangelo's paintings need to look at paintings by any other artist." (...) "This", he adds provocatively, "is a common view". "A common view", Aretino replies, "among people who repeat each others opinion as one sheep follows the next, and with a few painters who are the apes of Michelangelo."*

Aretino's defense of Raphael, while Venice had imposed the cult of Michelangelo through Vasari's "Vita" where Raphael is solely presented as a pupil of Michelangelo, derives of the bad relationship between Michelangelo and Aretino. Michelangelo had in particular one (or two)

stabile homosexual partners (Tommaso de' Cavalieri) and rebuked Aretino's caprices, and for example refused to send one of his drawings to Aretino. Aretino had also sent a rough sketch for the program planning for the Sistine Chapel, but too late. It is also to be noted that at the time of the sack of Rome in 1527, Michelangelo, a Florentine patriot, joined the republican faction of his city in total revolt against the Medicis and worked on the military architecture of the fortifications. Aretino's desire to "own" the uncontrollable Michelangelo became total rage and the man who organized all the sex-scandals of Italian political life of his time, wrote in November 1545 a letter to Michelangelo to complain about the licentious nature of the "Last Judgment".

Aretino (Lettres, p. 443): *"Sir, Seeing the totality of your "Judgment", I hoped to find again the illustrious grace of Raphael in the touching beauty of invention. But as a Christian, I'm ashamed of license, so contrary to the spirit, which you adopted in the aspirations of our true faith. Hence this Michelangelo of astonishing fame, this Michelangelo known for his wisdom, this Michelangelo we all admire wanted to show to the world as much impiety in religion as perfection in art."* The letter, written at the beginning of the witch hunt started by the Counter-Reformation, and published afterwards, will provoke a big quarrel.

We now get a pretty good general idea of the political geometry and cultural battle at that epoch. Before discussing some of the paintings of Raphael, we still need to meet some other figures.

First of all **Paolo Giovio** (Come 1483 - Florence 1552), friend of Raphael and his first biographer (biography ever published?). Raphael paints for him *de "Alba Madonna"* (Nat.Gal. Wash.). Giovio was a doctor and bishop of Nocera. Handyman of Alexander Farnese (the nephew of future pope Alexander Farnese under the name of Paul III, organizer of the Council of Trent), it was his databank, resembling police archives that will serve as ground documentation for his one-man band **Giorgio Vasari** (1511-1574).

Roland Le Mollé in *"Giorgio Vasari, l'homme des Médicis"* writes (p. 92): *"His (Giovio's) main work are the chronicles of his times: "Historiarium sui temporis libri". He became nevertheless famous for something else: he had installed in his large villa bordering the lake of Como a museum, where starting 1520 he collected numerous portraits of important personalities. Underneath every portrait figured a note resuming the life and work of every person represented. The gallery of famous men was ordered according to four categories: the scientists and poets, the humanists, the statesmen and the warriors"*.

Karel Vereycken, in *"The egg without a shadow of Piero della Francesca"* describes the Giovio/Vasari project: *"The person who has left the greatest mark on the history of Renaissance art is without a doubt the painter-historian, and student of Michelangelo, Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574). The genesis of his main work can be summarized as follows. Around 1543 in Rome, Vasari met Bishop Paolo Giovio, a collector of artworks close to Alessandro Farnese. Giovio "suggested" that Vasari write the biographies of the great Italian artists. When, with the able assistance of a team of researchers, Vasari enthusiastically began writing the Lives of the Great Architects, Painters, and Sculptors, a generous commission from the Farnese family rewarded the intrepid historian. Michelangelo, praised by Vasari in a flattering biography, thanked him*

with a sonnet. Published in 1550, the 4.000 pages of the "Lives", a veritable compilation of all the diverse writings of the period, will forever leave their mark on the manner in which Renaissance art will be grasped by posterity. So it is usefull, without creating too much of a caricature, to draw a schematic of Vasari's vision of art. The collection of biographies is spread out in three volumes. The first "infancy", regroups the "primitives": Cimabue, Giotto, Duccio, etc. These artists possessed the quality of "religious sentiment", but painting was not yet "a science". The second section, "youth", relates the lives of the "transitional" figures: Ghiberti, Masaccio, Uccello, Piero della Francesca, Ghirlandaio, Alberti, etc. These artists, writes Vasari in the preface to the third section, understood nothing of great art, because: "All these craftsmen put all their efforts into realising the impossible in art, and especially in their disagreeable foreshortenings and perspectives, which are as difficult to execute as they are unpleasant to look at." Only the artists who make it into the third part represent "maturity", "the" Renaissance. The norm of their art opens with Leonardo, passing through Raphael and culminating with Michelangelo, whose work is such perfection that, according to Vasari, after it art can only decline. (...) According to Vasari, this "perfetta maniera" (perfect style) is carried to its apogee by the students of Michelangelo and Raphael in Florence and in Venice: himself, Rosso Fiorentino, Giulio Romano, Domenico Beccafumi, Giorgione, Titian, etc." (It is the Aretino network ; K.V.).

Is there a more efficient way to describe the intellectual holdup on the artistical milieu of those times ? That this project was run by the highest spheres of Venice, is reinstated by the fact that in reality Vasary was also Aretino's handyman.

Bertrand Levergeois writes (p. 225): *"Aretino appreciates Vasari, who, otherwise, was born in Arezzo. Their friendship comes about in 1533, when the Venetian by adoption desires that his "son", nineteen years his junior, accepts the task of being the intermediary between him and duke Alexander de Medicis. An intense correspondence permits each of them to keep on top of what matters. That way, in December 1535, Vasari describes to his friend the ceremonies that take place in Florence at the occasion of the consecration of the Fortezza da Basso ; in march 1536, Vasari sends the sketches of the paintings for the Medici's palace ; in april of the same year, he brings to him in summary form the sumptuous preparations for the entrance of Charles V in Florence. From his side, Pietro labels his dear "son" Vasari as an "historian, a poet, a philosopher and a painter without comparison". At his demand, he even advises him for his marriage, and the other (Vasari) will always keep a high esteem, to the point as to paint a portrait of his mother. Vasari will even ask Aretino to preface the monumental and today celebrated art-history ("Lives of the excellent painters, sculptors and architects", 1550) by "some verses" of his pen. But his "father" will decline the offer, under the pretext of the heavy work necessary for the publication of his correspondence."*

5. The "Stanza della Segnatura"

Any serious analysis of these frescoes must start from the following observation : since we are not talking about movable (easel) paintings, but about fixed frescoes, our analysis has to concentrate on grasping and defining the conceptual unity of the three frescoes, similar as if we were dealing with a single tryptique, or with three different movements of the same symphony. What unites the *"The Exaltation of Eucharist"* (Disputa), lets say on our left hand, *"The School of*

Athens , on our right hand, with the *"Parnassus"* (in front) and the fourth wall divided between the *"Judicial Virtues"*, *"Tribonianus consigning the Pandects to Justinian"*, and *"Pope Gregory IX approving the Decretals"* ? Any separated analysis of this or that fresco ends up in a fallacy of composition, an intellectual fraud.

A) Chronology

We will not redevelop the *"timing"* of the project, neatly illustrated by the way Julius II used the League of Cambrai for his ends. Simply remember:

1509

January 13 : Rafael receives the first recorded payment for his work in the *"Stanza della Segnatura"*.

May 14 : victory of the League of Cambrai at Agnadel.

October 8 : Rafael is nominated *"scriptor brevium"*, an ecclesiastical title offering him a stabile position and income at the papal court.

October 28 : Julius II affirms to Francesco Corner that *"he never desired the destruction of Venice."*

B) Motivation

The project of the *"Stanza della Segnatura"*, named this way because after having served originally as the pope's library, the rooms became the siege of the tribunal of the inquisition at the times of the Counter-reformation instigated by Paul III, the project was a collateral of the reconstruction of Saint-Peters basilica (by Donato Bramante) which had to protect the tomb of Julius II (by Michelangelo) and the decoration of the Sistine Chapel (also by Michelangelo).

That this cultural policy was decided at the expense of another one to be crushed, is witnessed by the report of Vasari (p. 297) in his *"Life of Piero della Francesca"*: *"Then, after being brought to Rome, Piero painted two scenes for Pope Nicholas V in competition with Bramante of Milan in the upper chambers of the palace, which were likewise torn down by Julius II so that Raphael of Urbino could paint the "Freeing of Saint Peter", the "Mass of Bolsena", along with several other scenes which Bramantino, an excellent painter for his times, had executed there. I cannot count the life of this Bramantino, neither describe the works who perished, since I heard that there figured in these paintings, which Julius ordered to be destroyed, portraits of such a beauty, that only the spoken word was lacking to make theme alive. Raphael of Urbino had most of the portraits copied, of which the portrait of Niccolo Fortebraccio ; the one of Charles VII, king of France ; of Antonio Colonna, prince of Salern ; of Francesco Cormignuola, of Giovanni Vitellesco, of cardinal Bessarion, of Francesco Spinola and of Battista Canneto. All these these portraits were given by Giulio Romano, student and heritor of Raphael to Paolo Giovio which putted them in his museum in Como."*

The fact that Julius II and the Venetians, in their drive to erect a new Rome, couldn't tolerate seeing the face of Bessarion is not surprising, since it was Bessarion, together with Nicolas of Cusa who had ripped apart the fraud of the *"Donation of Constantine"*, a fakery concocted in the early middle ages which allegedly gave the western church (Rome)

predominance over the entire church. The first Roman emperor Constantine supposedly gave Silvester I the "*Empirium*" (which meant in practice that the Roman clergy, imitating the Roman senate, confiscated the right to elect the pope). In his "*Concordantia Catholica*" (Book III, Chapter II) Cusa affirms that "*there never has been a donation of Constantine.*" The humanist pope Nicholas V, installed in the Vatican the anti-Aristotelian humanist **Lorenzo Valla** (1407-1457) who on the basis of rigorous philological work showed the total fallacy of the document. Reworking Augustine, Valla will write a "*Treatise on The free will*", and Valla will be the main inspirer of Erasmus, for his Christian humanism and his beautiful Latin. Erasmus' treaty "*De libero arbitrio*" (1524) (on the free will) will be violently attacked by Luther in his "*De servo arbitrio*" (1525) (the enslaved will), and became Leibniz' starting point for the "*Theodicee*."

Nello Ponente, in "*Qui était Raphaël*", resumes with admiration the ambitious enterprise of propaganda undertaken by Julius II: "*Raphael demonstrated under the eyes of Julius II the triumph of humanist ideas inside the church, he brought the justification for the role played by the spiritual power in the exact spirit of the "Renovatio" (the rebuilding of antique Rome) which justified in the same time the reconquered authority of Rome. Julius II was a warrior pope and a smart politician : his personality dominates during years of trouble the political scene of Italy and Europe. But he was also the nephew of Sixtus IV, it is the promoter of the first Pinacoteca which existed in the world : the one of the Capitol -- of the first pope which worried about giving the people the possibility to know works of art. Julius II continued that ideal with even more enthusiasm : he had the chance to have at his side some of the greatest artists of the Renaissance and knew to have confidence in them : to Bramante he gave the gigantic task to rebuild the Saint Peters basilica ; to Michelangelo he ordered his funeral monument and he imposed to him the decoration of the Sistine Chapel ; Raphael for his part, painted the harmonious poem of the frescoes of the Stanza, the "speculum doctrinale" of Neoplatonism of which they incarnate the triumph at the heart the Roman church. His obedience to that doctrine, his precise correspondence to that given goal and also maybe his ideological disposability make these frescoes without any doubt the best echo of Julius II ideal.*"

"*The warrior pope knew the flaw of his epoch ; anticipating the tempest that threatened the absolute spiritual primacy of Rome and before the growing turbulence of consciousness, he felt the necessity to glorify, to exaltate the power of the church and the papacy, to reinforce it as spiritual power but also as a political power ; and that means in all dimension of the term, it is also in the cultural domain. While he was confronting the tormented soul of Michelangelo, whose anguish didn't stop growing, Julius II felt in total agreement with Raphael ; a dialogue takes place between them, the pope indicating the themes of the frescoes destined for the Stanza, theme which he himself had defined -- as recalls us the historian Paolo Giovio -- with the probable help of some men of letters.*"

"*Julius II design was clear and decided, supported by a clearly marked innovative spirit ; for him the demonstration of the church coincided with the reconquered power of Rome. Because in Rome, the pope found again the remnants of a grandiose heritage which constituted for him the promoting agent of history and, cling to the past, the pope wanted to be the mediator of the future. Hence the necessity of a new Saint Peters basilica to replace the one formerly build by Constantine.*"

C) The intellectual authors of the project.

Hence we discover the authors of the project; Julius II and Raphael of course but also the advisor in the backroom. According to the historians they were : **Paolo Giovio**, the archivist who ordered Vasari to rewrite the history of art ; the venetian **Pietro Bembo**, represented under the figure of Zoroaster in "*The School of Athens*" ; **Thomas Fedra Inghirami**, chief librarian of the Vatican (the same one Erasmus blasted for his rampant paganism in the "*Ciceronian*". The other influent men of letters, friends of Raphael which are thought of for having participated in the program of the "*Stanza*", are the inevitable **Baldassare Castiglione** and **Cardinal Bibbiena** (1470-1520), treasurer general of the church at the time of Leo X.

Gonzague Truc, in his "*Léon X et son siècle*" writes on Bibbiena (p. 120): "*His unexpected death in 1520 made arise unbearable and undoubtedly wrong assumptions. It is said that he was poisoned with eggs on orders from the pope (Leo X) of which he prematurely coveted the tiara. It is a little bit brutal. On the other hand, he also supposedly would have forecasted the natural death of the pontiff, having gained the support of Francis Ist for the succession and that he wouldn't have tolerated the discontent of his friend, informed of these maneuvers. It is a little bit subtle. He seemed in any case to be animated by that ambition. One hoped more wisdom from that voluptuous man. His usual behavior didn't gave any forewarnings of such excesses. He had a lot of fun and otherwise then in words alone. He kept a correspondence with Bembo where the two cronies, changing their names, jested on their escapades and those of others. He asked Raphael to decorate his bathroom with frescoes of which it was said they couldn't be shown to anybody and who would have been strange for an ecclesiastic if the ecclesiastics of those times were not in the same time great lords. One could see in one fresco Venus emerging out of the waters carried by a dauphin, with red cheeks in many loving smiles on her face and many other images of that kind.*"

Giorgio Vasari, in his "*Life of Raphael*", mentions him (p. 335) : "*But now that I have already discussed these artistic matters, perhaps more than was required, let me return to the life and death of Rafael to say that, since Rafael was a close friend of Bernardo Dovizio, Cardinal of Bibbiena, the cardinal for many years had begged him to take a wife, and Raphael had not explicitly refused to follow the cardinal's wishes but had delayed the matter by saying that he wanted to wait three or four years. Once this period passed, and Raphael was least expecting it, the cardinal reminded him of his promise, and, feeling himself obliged, Raphael, as the courteous man he was, did not want to break his promise, and so he accepted as his wife a niece of this cardinal. And because he was always very discontented with this noose, he tried to gain time in such a way that many months passed before the marriage took place. And Raphael did this for a respectable reason. Since he had served at the papal court for many years and since Pope Leo owed him a tidy sum of money, Raphael had been given some indication that at the end of the work on the hall he was painting for the pope, the latter, in recognition of his labors and his talents, would give him a cardinal's red hat, having already decided to name a good number of cardinals, among whom were men of less merit than Raphael. Meanwhile, Raphael secretly attended to his love affairs and pursued his amorous pleasures beyond all moderation, and on one occasion he happened to be even more immoderate than usual; having returned home, for that reason, with a very high fever, his doctors thought he had overheated, and since he did not*

admit to them the excesses he had committed, his doctors imprudently bled him in such a way that he grew weak and felt faint, just when he needed a restorative. So he made his will and first, as a good Christian, sent his mistress away after giving her the means to live honestly; afterwards he divided his possessions among his pupils Giulio Romano (whom he had always loved a great deal), Giovanfrancesco Fiorentino called Il Fattore, and some priest from Urbino. (...) Then, having confessed and repented, Raphael came to the end of his life's journey on the same day that he was born, which was Good Friday of his thirty-seventh year, ..."

D) The executants

Although it is rather sure that Raphael is at least the executant of the first Stanza (The School of Athens, Disputa, Parnassus, etc.) all the experts converge to affirm that for the other rooms a whole team of painters participated. Let us listen to **André-Charles Coppier**, who in his "*L'énigme de la Segnatura*" and after having scrutinized the book-keeping of the Vatican of those days arrives at the following astonishing conclusions disturbing all a priori judgments (p. 15): "*Coming back from his crusade in the Romagna region, Julius II took the resolution to cover all naked walls of the Vatican. (...) team of six other painters, under the orders of Bramante transformed pope Nicholas V apartments. Only Fra Angelico's chapel shall be left untouched. The frescoes of Piero della Francesca, of Andrea del Castagno and of Bonfigli were taken down, in the papal haste to mark the late reign with an ensemble worth attention. Whatever said the noisy pre-Raphaelites, so forgotten today, it is not credible that the destruction of these anterior works was not largely compensated by the unexpected appearance of their succeeding works of genius. Because nothing could foretell a noticeable progress of art with the new decoration of the Stanza as Julius II had dreamed, of which a legend made an informed Maecenas, preoccupied with embellishing the Vatican with immortal works of art. The choice of secondary painters chosen by him to accomplish the hard labor of decorator makes vanish any idea of that order. These painters : Pietro Vanucci ("Perugino"), Baldassare Peruzzi, Bartolomeo Suardi ("Bramantino"), Lorenzo Lotto, Michele des Becca and Giovanni Ruisch resided at the Borgo, in the old Rovere palace. They had dinner together at the costs of Bramante, who debited the expenses on the accounts of the Vatican. They were art jobbers. In the middle of the summer 1508, this diligent team worked on the global concept of the decoration of the Stanza, rather complicated on the literary side, where the symbolism of Christian exegetism had a bigger role than imagination. One can judge on that by the remaining fragments of Perugino's task in the room of the "Conflagration" and by the vault of Baldassare Peruzzi. The latter was taken out of the job by Agostino Chigi (him again ; K.V.) which asked him to build a palace in the vineyards of Trastevere. In exchange for this rapture, Chigi offered to Julius II the services of another painter of which he praised the spirit, the charm and the graphical fantasies. Giovanni Antonio Bazzi ("Sodoma") alias "Il Mattaccio" for his extravaganzas as historian of the brush, who just finished the cycle of thirty one frescoes at the cloisters of Monteoliveto Maggiore."*

" (...) In reality Sodoma had realized in thirty months thirty one huge frescoes featuring sometimes as many as fifteen life size figures situated in complicated landscapes or composite architectural settings of audacious fantasy. It was a professional tour de force, poorly paid, since Sodoma received only 220 ducats of 7 pounds for that enormous task being more than 4.000 square feet of fresco. It is appropriate to emphasize that all expenses were covered by the

convent ; that he even thanked the prior to introduce him to Agostino Chigi of Siena, the richest merchant of all Christianity. The latter took him immediately to Rome and presented him to the pope which confided him the totality of the decoration of the tribunal of the Signatura."

"Vasari, who didn't like him for having found himself in competition with him close to Aretino, that great dispenser of glory, seemed to have taken pleasure in defaming him with an asperity too sensible for not being suspected biased. He says: "If men knew how to conduct themselves at the moment they got the occasion to enrich themselves, if in their youth they had joined the effort to combine talent and fortune, what marvelous things would not produce themselves ?" . "If Giovanni Antonio would have possessed a merit equal to his good fortune, he wouldn't have been condemned to live miserable old days after having lived an extravagant and bestial life." Sodoma was indeed an example of the wasting of magnificent gifts of nature, little by little destroyed by the tipsiness of an extraordinary manual facility, by the febrile brio of a man solicited by tyrannical passions he couldn't resist any longer."

"For sure, the two nicknames which made his glory, are not those that an artist would like himself to claim today. But in the times of Julius II, where the fool and the mignon had an envied position at the papal court, we cannot but recall the answer of Benvenuto Cellini to Baccion Bandinelli who accused him of being a "Sodomitaccio" before the amused Duke Como. "Fool! You surpass the limits. Please to God that I know an art so noble that Jupiter and Ganymede have practiced it in heaven! The greatest princes and the greatest kings of the world practice it down here. But me, poor obscure man, how could I know such an admirable thing?"

"Besides, it is not until the date of 1512 that he was named that way, for the explosion of joy by which he screamed "Sodoma ! Sodoma !" to design his horse in the race of free horses in Rome, where his horse, being the winner needed, at once to be given a name."

" (...) One discovers in the papal archives that Sodoma received on October 13, of the bursar of the Vatican a down payment of 50 ducats on the totality of his work, and partly in advance, since Chigi had to lend his signature as guarantor for his engagement."

E) The Subject

Since we know that it was Julius II himself with his collaborators, the venetian "magicians", who fixed the conceptual content of the Stanza, and since we have identified their cultural design, we can affirm here that the subject of the rooms was the same as the reconstruction of the Saint Peters Basilica : the triumphant roman church. For that purpose, theology, dialectical philosophy and Apollo, God of harmony will be mobilized.

Giorgio Vasari's explanation tends to confirm that analysis when he writes in the "Life of Raphael" : *"Having been greeted very affectionately by Pope Julius upon his arrival, Raphael began a scene in the Room of the Signatura depicting the theologians reconciling philosophy and astrology with theology in which he portrayed all the wise men of the world presenting different arguments."*

Nello Ponente tries another explanation that completes ours here saying: *"The Truth, the Good, the Beautiful, subjects given by Julius II for the rooms correspond perfectly with the Neoplatonic ideal. The Truth, formulated in his theological acceptance as revealed truth is depicted in the scene of the "Disputation of the Holy Sacrament" (named usually so but inexact, since the real subject is the triumph of the Eucharist). The Good is personified in the lunettes of the "Theological and cardinal virtues", and identified with canonical and civil law in the two frescoes executed by collaborators representing respectively "Pope Gregory IX approving the Decretals" and "Tribonianus consigning the Pandects to Justinian". The Beautiful, theme of "Parnassus", is assimilated with poetry and music. The personifications of the Truth (Theology and Philosophy), the Good (Justice), the Beautiful (Poetry) rise above every scene that corresponds to it, while at the angles figure representations of the "First Movement" (Astronomy) the "Judgment of Salomon", "Adam and Eve", "Apollo and Marsya".*

There exists less orthodox interpretations and they shed convincingly new coherence from the background we have developed.

Förster, in his *"Raphael"* (Leipzig, 1867) is reported stating that Raphael didn't do anything less than a synthesis of the dominating ideas of his time, notably those of **Marsilio Ficino** and **Jacques Sadolet**.

F. S. Kraus, in his *"La Camera della Segnatura"* (Florence 1890) proposed to search the relation which unites the *"School of Athens"* with the other paintings of the room in a passage of **Pico della Mirandola** : *"Philosophia veritatem quaerit, theologia invenit, religio possidet"* (Philosophy searches the truth, theology finds her, religion possesses her). That passage would certainly have pleased Julius II ears.

The first fresco, (the left panel of our *"tryptich"*) to be painted is supposedly the *"Dispute of the Holy Sacrament"*, and its real name (according to Vasari) is *"The Exaltation of Eucharist"*. The large gathering of saints and theologians discussing the Trinity is largely spoiled by the arrogant pride of Julius II : his name figures twice on the altar that carries the eucharistic host. And on the right side the landscape features the huge white marble blocks that are the foundations of Saint Peters basilica.

Konrad Oberhuber, an art historian fascinated with dualism and Anthroposophy, in his *"Raphael"* gives us (p. 100) his reading of the right fresco of the *"tryptich"* : *"As in the Dispute, the School of Athens is much richer and complex than it looks like in the first approach. She has as subject the harmony of Platonic and Aristotelian thinking as it was thought of by the thinkers of the Renaissance, in particular the great Pico della Mirandola."*

Bertrand Schefer, in his introduction to the *"900 Conclusions philosophiques, cabalistiques et théologiques"* of Pico della Mirandola writes (p. 11) : *"Philosopher, poet, letter writer, exegesis commentator of the Bible ("Heptaplus", (1489), commentary of the Psalms), author of an important polemical treatise on astrology, the "Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem", published posthumously in 1496, and a "Commento sopra une canzona d'amore" (1486), precise answer, in Neoplatonic spirit, to the commentary of Ficino on Plato's "Symposium", Pico is also the initiator of the Christian cabala, an intellectual current*

dominating the sixteenth century, looking into Hebraic wisdom a confirmation of Christianity, which will inspire Johann Reuchlin, Francesco Giorgio Veneto, or also Giordano Bruno and Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim. But in a sense taking the negative print of his century, his work is also animated by two books that he never wrote : the "Concord of Plato and Aristotle", partially developed in his treatise "On Being and the One" (1491) and the "Poetical Theology", which became also mythical and of which the title alone suffices us to highlight the spirit of the Quattrocento."

Pico della Mirandola writes already in his *"De Hominis Dignitate"* (p. 69): *"That is the reason why, not satisfied to have added to the common doctrines quantity of remarks on the primitive theology of Mercury Trismegistus, on the teachings of the Chaldeens and Pythagoras, on the most secret mysteries of the Jews, we have also proposed to the debate a certain number of discoveries and conceptions which will be offered to us in the domain of physics and theology. We first of all have established that Plato and Aristotle accord each other ; many have thought that before us, nobody has proved it sufficiently. Under the Latins, Boetius pledged to do so, but nothing indicates that he ever realized what he kept for his project. Under the Greeks, Simplicius gave himself the same goal : pleased the heaven that he showed himself at the heights of his intentions ! Augustine himself, in his writing "Against the Academicians", writes that several authors conceived, with much delicacy in the argumentation the project to prove the same thesis, that is that the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are nothing but one. Hence John the Grammarian : he affirms that those alone who don't hear the words of Plato believe they are in disagreement with Aristotle, but it is left to his successors to take care of the demonstration."*

A curious observation makes us meet Pico della Mirandola and Raphael. The little painting called *"The Three Graces"* (Chantilly) figures equally on the reverse side of a medal featuring Pico della Mirandola on the front side. Aren't these the *"platonian"* values of Marsilio Ficino *"Beauty, Love and Pleasure"*. It seems alas probable that Raphael was a *"Neoplatonic"* initiate of that esoterical tendency.

Konrad Oberhüber on *"The School of Athens"*: *"Two gods are presiding the scene. On the left Apollo, sun god and god of harmony ; on the left Minerva (goddess of wisdom ; patron of Rome she looked after the defense of the cities; K.V.). Beneath Apollo, in the reliefs, young men are fighting and even lower a woman is raped by a sea god. Hint, as already Bellori stated at the end of the seventeenth century, to the fact that music will triumph over luxury and rage, and closes down on the moral aspect of philosophy as discovery of the harmony of the world."*

" (...) [in the painting] we see at the extreme left angle a baby and an old man and with them, two persons bend over a book situated at the foot of a colonnade. One of them visibly carries the bacchic crown. His face is one of the few ones that can be considered a portrait ; he certainly represents Tommaso "Fedra" Inghirami, librarian of the pope, which is known to us by a later portrait of Raphael. What is doing Inghirami here with this crown associated to the cult of Bacchus ? Shortly after Raphael's death, cardinal Sadolet wrote a treaty on philosophy which has Inghirami (who also had died before) defending rhetoric and denying any value to philosophy, his major argument being that everything that can be written is already contained in the mystical and mythological texts of Orpheus and his followers. In the context of the fresco, Inghirami is certainly a dionysian follower of Orphism, one of the origins of Greek philosophy."

Dionysos is indeed the brother of Apollo, and their teachings are one. From out of the orphic mysteries are born the writings of Pythagoras, who conceived of the musical harmonies of the fourth, the fifth and the octave as foundations of the universe (=Rameau ; K.V.). A strange man with a turban, kneeling down, arising from behind a column, makes the sign of "two" with his hand to the young man with the angelical face who holds the tablet so attentively studied by Pythagoras. It has been interpreted as a reference to the doubling of the octave, which completes the perfect number "ten" written on the tablet, conformingly to the "De institutione musica" and of the "Matematica" of Boetius. (...) Pythagoras was considered in Antiquity as the incarnation of Apollo on earth."

" (...) On the other side, with all the clarity of the human spirit and by way of a geometrical figure Archimedes presents the demonstration of the existence of harmonical proportions. The drawing on the slate indicates, it is said, the harmony utilized for the construction of the temple where the philosophers are gathered."

In a class I gave some fifteen years ago, I had developed the fact that the diagonals of the hexagon, which is the underlying geometry for *"The School of Athens"*, effectively can be used to generate the harmonic mean, and Raphael used the crossing of these diagonals to fix the recession of the successive arches behind Plato and Aristotle, which would also explain why Raphael used the features of Bramante for his Archimedes (according to Vasari), Bramante being the architect of the Saint Peters basilica who lodges the philosophers and who forms the *"stage"* for *"The School of Athens"*.

Oberhüber: *"The disposition of the group (Archimedes and his pupils) is remarkable by the delicacy of its equilibrium. Near to them, Zoroaster holds the celestial sphere and Ptolemeus (which in those days was often confounded with the Egyptian king of the same name) holds the sphere of the earth."*

"(...) With his arm, Aristotle embraces the earthly domain, the domain of the causes, of mathematical thought and of the training of the youth. Diogène Laërce, source of anecdotes on the Greek philosophers, underlines these different aspects of his teachings. By opposition, Plato looks weak and aged ; his feet hardly touch the floor, and the design of his clothes -where dominates warm mystical red on a lilac field-are oriented according to a vertical axis. He points one finger to heaven, magnificently illustrating the famous saying of Saint Bonaventura: "Et ideo videtur, quod philosophos datus sit Platoni sermo spaientiae, Aristoteli vero scientiae. Ille enim pricipaliter aspiciebat ad spuperiora, hic vero pricipaliter ad inferiora" (And so it is that amidst the philosophers, the gift of Plato is to speak about wisdom, the one of Aristotle about science. The first one looked especially to the things of above, the second towards things down). According to Diogène Laërce, one saw Plato as a son of Apollo, send on earth to heal the spirit of mankind."

"(...) The current of Apollonian thought, poetical and enthusiastical who culminates with Plato, is balanced by the Aristotelian discourse, but each current has to operate a fusion between morals and nature. Socrates is considered the founder of Ethics, but it is Aristotle who keeps in his hands his "Ethics". Aristotle has the reputation to have explained better than anybody else the natural world, but it is Plato who holds the "Timaeus", dialogue consecrated more specifically to

nature. Marsilio Ficino, the great Neoplatonic of the fifteenth century circumscribes that duality as follows: "Plato de naturalibus agit divine, quemadmodum Aristoteles, vel de divinibus naturaliter agit" (Plato deals with the thing of nature divinely while Aristotle deals naturally even with divine things)."

The other vision of a pacific coexistence between Plato and Aristotle came from cardinal **Bessarion** himself, and he said : "*Colo et veneror Aristotelem, amo Platonem*" (I cultivate and venerate Aristotle, I love Plato). At the opposite of the attitude of his teacher Gemistus Pletho, Bessarion tried to pacify diplomatically the turbulent relations between the churches of east and west, divided by the great quarrel on the Plato/Aristotle issue. One must also note that certain writings of the Platonic Proclus were attributed by error to Aristotle, and that for Cusa and Bessarion the "*Aristotelian cult*" seemed far worse than even Aristotle himself. To unite in one space-time, as in a "*Sacra Conversazione*", in the time of all times, the great minds of philosophy, theology and poetry is a beautiful idea. But sadly enough, it is not Cusa, Cosimo de' Medicis, Pletho, Bessarion, Erasmus or Leonardo one finds in "*The School of Athens*", but the whole panegyric of reincarnated souls according to esoterical neo-Platonism of Marsilio Ficino.

Karel Vereycken wrote : "*A recent study ("Leonard" of Daniel Arasse) refutes the identification of Leonardo da Vinci with the figure of Plato in "The School of Athens". The drawing ("self-portrait of Turin") which is supposed to give credence to that identification, would have been drawn in the Nineteenth century, after drawings done copying "The School of Athens" ! At best, the drawing dates from the same period as the cartoons of the fresco. Leonardo being absent from Rome, Raphael would have done it by memory. But when Raphael met Leonardo, the master was about fifty years of age, while the drawing shows a splendid elderly man. Raphael's "Plato" resembles much more the drawing of "a Philosopher" (Aristotle ?) that the humanist Ciriaco d'Ancona made after an antique bust. To imagine that Raphael wanted to assimilate Leonardo with a Plato presented as a model seems difficult" (...) "while Castiglione mocks Leonardo ("The Courtier", Book XXXIX) regretting "that one of the prime painters of the word despises the art in which he is unique and started learning philosophy, in which he has forged so strange conceptions and chimeras that he could never paint them in his work".*

Taking into account these new findings, we risk the hypothesis that it can be an imaginary portrait of Hermes Trismegistus, "*the first theologian*", since "*Plato*" was supposedly his reincarnation. Giovanni di Stefano's monumental pavement square inside the main door of Siena Cathedral represents Trismegistus as "*the contemporary of Moses*". In the nineteenth century, a representation of Trismegistus shows him in exactly the same position as Plato, the finger pointed towards heaven, but with the head of an Aristotle !

The "*equal balancing*" of Platonism and Aristotelianism can also be remarked Al Gore's Malthusian environmentalist manifesto "*Earth in the Balance*", who illustrated his book with "*The School of Athens*" of Raphael ! Gore writes (p. 249: "*As the world discovered, the greatest Greek philosophers were, first Plato and, second, Aristotle. The most significant difference between them concerned the relationship between the intellect and physical reality or, in other words, between humankind and nature.*" Then he explains how Platonism and Aristotelianism interact as a yin/yang in history. Each has its particular qualities at precise moments in history,

and if we want to save today Gaia, the goddess earth, time has come to go back to some good old Aristotle, it is the respect of limits.

Lets now have a look at the central fresco of the *"trptych" : "Parnassus"*. At the center we see Apollo/Orpheus playing his cithara, who suggests by its seven strings the harmony of the planets that the poets try to express. Apollo is surrounded by the nine muses (Clio, Euterpe, Melpomène, Thalia, Polymny, Errato, Terpsichore, Urany and Calliope). The poets are amidst others Boccaccio, Petrarch, Dante and Virgil, but also Homer for which Raphael copied the head of the "Laocoon" that was just discovered in 1506, and of which the subject is Apollo punishing one of his Trojan priest who had not nicely behaved (Apollo sent snakes to kill the children the priest tries to save...).

Conclusion

Hence, we discover some ugly truth about the myth that the counter-reformation tried to impose us about Raphael. Orphan since August 1, 1494, at the age of eleven, the brilliant child is obedient to the "most powerful" of his epoch: first Perugino, then Aretino, Chigi and Julius II. Later on, to Leo X and his cardinal Bibbiena. His Christian symbolical style, suffering the same weakness is hardly distinguishable from the style of his masters and pupils, to the point that Perugino's and Sodoma's works are often confounded with those of Raphael and his pupil Giulio Romano. Operating often from "citations" of Roman sculpture and over-using wax models, taking pieces of Leonardo and pieces of Michelangelo, his style will lose everything which is natural, ironical or picturesque and become the basis for the codification of esthetics, mannerism: beautiful forms, but death.

In 1504, when Raphael is 21 years old, he is chosen by Giovanni della Rovere, who takes advantage of the election of Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere) to introduce him to Soderini. A talented draughtsman without equal, Raphael will get enrolled by what Pope John-Paul II calls *"the structures of sin"*. Instead of leaving Italy with Erasmus or Leonardo to try to save the fruits of the Renaissance in England or France, or to ship in for the new world, he chose the system instead of truth. Voluntary victim of the "platonic" esoterical pagan current, his submission to their schemes will conduct him to an early death and make humanity lose his invaluable talent.

The Venetian/Genovese takeover operated by Agostino Chigi which brought Julius II into power in 1503, the failure of Erasmus of Rotterdam and the allied League of Cambrai, and the following increasing financial looting by indulgences, slave-trade and pillage, to keep their bubble economy alive, can be seen as the benchmark of what some call appropriately the *"Counter-Renaissance"*. The horrific, but profitable, indulgences and their derivatives, reestablished by Julius II, will greatly boost the career of that *"useful fool"* Martin Luther, and start several centuries of religious wars.

Timeline

- 1433 Birth of **Marsilio Ficino**
- 1439 Council of Florence.
- 1443 Birth of **Giuliano della Rovere** (futur Jules II) at Savone close to Genoa.
- 1448 **Gutenberg** reinvents printing.
- 1452 15 avril: birth of **Leonardo da Vinci**.
- 1459 **Marsilio Ficino**, in Florence.
- 1461 **Louis XI** becomes king of France.
- 1462 Cosimo de' Medicis gives Platonic manuscripts and a villa at Careggi to Ficino.
- 1464 Death of **Cosimo de Medicis, Pius II** and **Nicolas of Cusa**.
- 1467 Federigo Montefeltro heads a anti-Venetian league.
- 1469 Birth of **Erasmus** at Rotterdam.
- 1474 Birth of **Pietro Bembo** in Venise.
- 1475 Birth of **Michelangelo** Buonarotti.
- 1478 Birth of **Baldassare Castiglione**.
- 1483 Birth of **Paolo Giovio**., and birth **Rafael** Sanzio of Urbino.
April 25 : Leonardo signs the contract to paint "*The Virgin on the Rocks*".
- 1486 October: Publishing of the "900 Conclusiones" of Pico de la Mirandola.
"On the dignity of Man" is the introduction but remains unedited.
- 1492 Birth of **Pietro Aretino**.
- 1494 Flight of Giuliano della Rovere to France, where he joins Charles VIII invading Italy.
- 1495 **Leonardo** starts the "*Last Supper*" in Milan.
- 1498 **Pacioli** publishes the "*Divina Proportione*" illustrated by Leonardo.
- 1499 Death of **Marsilio Ficino**.

- 1503 Death of pope **Alexandre VI**. Election of Giuliano della Rovere who becomes pope **Julius II**.
- 1504 Occupation of cities of Romagna by Venice.
- 1505 **Bramante** starts the reconstruction of Saint Peters basilica in Rome. Initial plans for Julius II tomb by Michelangelo.
Michelangelo flights from Rome April 17, but accepts reconciliation with Julius II in November.
- 1506 April 2: **Erasmus** obtains the charge of preceptor to accompany to Italy the children of Battista Boerio, physician of Henry VII.
September 4: Erasmus obtains a doctorate in Theology in Turin.
November 11: Erasmus assists the triumphal entrance of Julius II in Bologna. He quits partially the clothes of monk.
Discovery of the "*Laocoon*". Flight of Michelangelo to Florence.
Start of the rebellion of Genoa against Louis XII.
- 1507 Punitive expedition of **Louis XII** against Genoa. Deceiving campaign of Maximillian of Austria against Venice. Louis XII asks Leonardo, by mediation of the Signioria, to stay in Milan where Louis XII is arriving.
March 18, 1507 : **Margareta of Austria**, daughter of Maximillian, regentess of the Netherlands.
- 1508 May 10: Michelangelo starts decorating the Sistine Chapel.
September 15 : Erasmus finishes the edition of the "*Adagia*" at the printing office of **Aldus Manutius** in Venice.
December 10 : Treaty of Cambrai: constitution of an alliance against Venice between Louis XII, Maximilian of Austria, Ferdinand V of Aragon and a multitude of Italian city states.
Initial works for the decoration of the new library of Julius II in the Vatican (Stanza) by Sodoma and Raphael: the "*Disputa*". According to Paolo Giovio, friend and biographer of Raphael, it is Julius II who defines the conceptual content.
Michelangelo completes the statue of the pope in Bologna.
- 1509 Erasmus : arrives in Rome at the beginning of the year.
January 13: Raphael receives his first official payment for his work in the Stanza della Segnatura.
March 23 : the pope declares he joins the League of Cambrai against Venice
April 23: Death of **Henry VII** of England.
April 27: major excommunication of Venice.
May 14: victory of the **League of Cambrai at Agnadel**.
July: Erasmus leaves Italy for England. His hope is to educate Henry VIII which he met when the king was 8 years old. .
October 8: Rafael is nominated *scriptor brevium*, ecclesiastical title which assures him a stable position and income at the papal court.
October 28: Julius II affirms to Francesco Corner that he never desired the destruction of Venice.

- 1510 February 15: a peace treaty is concluded between Rome and Venice, but immediately the Council of ten issues a secret protest against the treaty which was imposed on Venice by force.
- 1511 Erasmus publishes *"In Praise of folly"* in Paris. Birth of Giorgio Vasari.
October 5: proclamation of the *"Holy League"*.
- 1512 November 2: public exposure of the Sistine Chapel.
- 1513 February 20: Death of Julius II. Leonardo, in Rome tries in vain to obtain contracts of the Vatican
- 1515 January 9: Leonardo notes the death of Louis XII. François becomes King of France.
- 1516 March 17: Death of Giuliani de Medicis, protector of Leonardo. Leonardo leaves Italy for France in autumn.
- 1517 October 31: Publication of Luthers 95 thesis against the indulgences.
- 1519 May 2 : Death of Leonardo de Vinci at Amboise.
- 1520 Death of Agostino Chigi. Death de Raphaël, only artiste burried in a roman mument, the Pantheon. In a sonnet, his friend, Baldassare Castiglione compares Raphaels reconstruction of antic Rome with "a resurrection he had to pay for with his life".
- 1522 Erasmus: official edition of the "Colloquia".
- 1524 Erasmus: "On the Free Will".
Luther: "The enslaved Will"
- 1527 Sac of Rome.
- 1528 Erasmus: "The Ciceronian". Castiglione: "The Courtier".
- 1529 Death of Baldassare Castiglione. Charles V is reported to have said of him: 'Yo os digo que es muerto uno de los mejores caballeros del mondo'.
- 1532 Arioste, in the third edition of his chivalric poem "Rolando Furioso" consecrates "The Scourge of Princes, the Divine Aretino".
- 1534 Rabelais: "Gargantua".
- 1536 Death of Erasmus in Basle.
- 1542 July 21: recreation of the Inquisition by pope Paul III.
- 1543 Erasmus works are burned in public in Milan.
- 1545 Opening of the Council of Trent.
- 1547 Death of Pietro Bembo.
- 1552 Death of Paolo Giovio.
- 1553 Joachim du Bellay in his *"La vieille Courtisane"* and Ronsard in *"La Catine"* take inspiration of Aretino's plays.
- 1556 Death of Pietro Aretino.
- 1559 Aretino's works and those of Erasmus are forbidden reading by the *"Index Vaticanus"*. The works of Erasmus remain outlawed till 1900.
- 1572 Revolt of the Netherlands, massacre of Saint-Barthélémy.
Death of Giorgio Vasari.

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