

Introduction

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Anthropomorphism—the projection of the human form onto aspects of the world—closely relates to early modern notions of analogy and microcosm. Both notions existed in Antiquity, but they came to be more closely associated during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, even as they changed in major ways. What had been construed as a ready metaphor for the order of creation was reworked into a complex system relating the human body to the body of the world. In the process, numerous books and images—cosmological diagrams, illustrated treatises on botany and zoology, maps, collections of ornaments, architectural essays, allegorical paintings and prints—were based on anthropomorphic analogy. The result was the spread not only of anthropomorphic expression but of a fundamentally anthropomorphic way of thinking.

But what does that way of thinking entail? What, for instance, does paralleling of the human body with all manner of things—concepts, mental states, inanimate objects, spatial relationships, and so forth—tell us about conceptions of figuration? What, that is, does anthropomorphism tell us about the ethical, intellectual, and religious implications of representation? On a related note, how did verbal and visual forms of anthropomorphism relate to one another? To what extent did they interact, to what extent did they reinforce one another, and to what extent did they conflict with one another or deviate? And finally, how are we to disentangle the various operations being performed by early modern anthropomorphic analogy? What kinds of meaning did such analogy enable, and what conceptions of meaning did it allow?

At heart, such questions derive from a basic tension inherent in the anthropomorphic model, a tension—present throughout the long early modern period—between the magical and the rational, the speculative and the practical, the literal and the metaphorical. After all, to publish a map of a continent produces one kind of knowledge; to anthropomorphize that map, e.g., by overlaying a human figure upon it, produces an entirely different sort of knowledge. And yet, it must be recognized that such forms of knowledge coexisted remarkably closely—indeed, were often inextricable, even interdependent—between roughly 1400 and 1700. To talk of the history of

* The opening section of this introduction was revised by Bret Rothstein; the closing summaries were co-authored by Rothstein, Melion, and Weemans.

anthropomorphism is thus to talk not only of figuration but also of the production of knowledge itself.

Such matters were of obvious interest to Enlightenment thinkers, and it is no coincidence that the term ‘anthropomorphism’ appears in the eighteenth century to designate, in a negative way, the attribution of human form to God.¹ Of greatest concern was the potential for confusion of categories. (On this point it is worth noting that all the other terms which precede ‘anthropomorphism’ similarly tend to criticize redescriptions of the divine in human terms.) Consider, for instance, *anthropopathy*, the attribution to God of human feelings, and *anthropology*, which previously had indicated, according to the definition of the *Encyclopédie* (1751–1772), ‘[...] how sacred authors attribute to God parts, actions, or conditions suited only to men, and that to accommodate and be proportional to the weakness of our intelligence’.² Or *anthropomorphites*, which designated a sect whose heresy consisted of interpreting literally all the passages in the Bible that assign a human body to God. Moreover, this critique of anthropomorphism, at least in its theological form, was not unknown to the ancients. It first appears in a passage of Xenophanes, who observes that, ‘[...]

¹ See Formey, J. S., “Anthropologie”, in Diderot D.—D'alembert J., *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris, Briasson: 1751) 497: ‘[...] maniere de s'exprimer, par laquelle les écrivains sacrés attribuent à Dieu des parties, des actions ou des affections qui ne conviennent qu'aux hommes, & cela pour s'accommorder & se proportionner à la foiblesse de notre intelligence [...]’. On the etymology of the term see Armangaud F., “Anthropomorphisme”, *Encyclopédia Universalis* (Paris: 1970) 280–284.

On the idea of anthropomorphism in general as universal and innate, see Guthrie S., *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion* (New York: 1993). On anthropomorphism as natural and intuitive or as cognitive and counter-intuitive, see Mithen S., *The Prehistory of the Mind: A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion and Science* (London: 1996); Boyer P., “What Makes Anthropomorphism Natural: Intuitive Ontology and Cultural Representations”, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2 (1996) 83–97.

On contemporary viability of anthropomorphism, see Vidal D., “Anthropomorphism or Sub-anthropomorphism? An Anthropological Approach to Gods and Robots”, *Journal of the Royal and Anthropological Institute* 13 (2007) 919–933, with bibliography. See also the essays by King E., Bernstein J. M., Dean C., Van Eck C., Flood F. B., Gamboni D., Garnett J., Rosser G., Meyer J., Mizuta M. E., and Payne A., in “Notes from the Field: Anthropomorphism”, *The Art Bulletin* 94 (2012) 10–31.

² Referring to Malebranche: ‘Now since Scripture is made for everyone, for the simple as well as for the learned, it is full of anthropologies. Not only does it give to God a body, a throne, a chariot, a retinue, the passions of joy, of sadness, of anger, of remorse, and the other movements of the soul: it also attributes to him ways of acting which are ordinary in men, in order to speak to the simple in a more sensible way’. Malebranche, *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, trans. P. Riley (Oxford: 1992) 136.

if oxen and horses and lions had hands and were able to draw with their hands and do the same things as men, horses would draw the shapes of gods to look like horses and oxen to look like oxen, and each would make the gods' bodies have the same shape as they themselves had'.³ He thus offers an early example of what would later become a recurring irony directed at Christianity: inverting the narrative of Genesis by asserting that man created God in his image.

As important—if not inherent—as the religious dimension of anthropomorphism is, though, we should not omit an essential point. Above all, we must take note of a genuine and visceral critique of anthropomorphism at the heart of Christianity. Or, rather, we must consider the kind of reverse anthropomorphism which also finds a place in that tradition, since the issue of the human form—the image—at the heart of Christian anthropology stems from a narrative of lost likeness, the story of a debased image. The essence of the matter in the eyes of early modern Christians, strictly speaking, was not so much the human element (obviously Christianity is anthropocentric) as the formal or morphological element: humanity shall recover its form, the divine image, only by losing its too-human form, by deforming—and thus reforming—itself. This latter scenario therefore constitutes a strange anthropomorphism,⁴ proceeding by an inverted or negative likeness of the human form.⁵

³ Xénophanes of Colophon, fragment 7.7, in McKirahan R. (ed.), *Philosophy Before Socrates: An Introduction with Texts and Commentary* (Indianapolis: 1994) 60.

⁴ Or perhaps even a kind of 'de-anthropomorphosis'. On this idea, see Bret Rothstein's essay in this volume.

⁵ See Javelet R., *Image et ressemblance au XII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1967).

We find such a conception in the work of Georges Didi-Huberman, who considers a newer mode of anthropomorphism that might be called abstract: for instance, in front of Tony Smith's famous minimalist cube (*Die*), one looks for a *human* depth—both as a matter of anthropology, now in the modern sense of the word, and morphology—although the object itself in no way recalls any human shape, any visible human likeness. Accordingly, being present before that object, observing it, standing near it, or even lying on the ground: all these dynamics relate to human ways of being, and concern a fundamental anthropology (especially in relation to the spatiality of the dead body), but without any formal similarity to a represented body. The criticism Michael Fried addressed to minimalism's claim of simple 'specific' volumes thus was right, if only partly: he recognized the inherent theatricality of those volumes, that specificity. And yet, Fried also felt something more—something that challenged him in its own insistently non-human form—but he reduced the matter to a simple question of representation or theater. See Didi-Huberman G., *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde* (Paris: 1992), in particular chapter 6 ("Anthropomorphisme et dissemblance"); idem, *Génie du non-lieu. Air, poussière, empreinte, hantise* (Paris: 2001); and Fried M., "Art and Objecthood", *Artforum* 5 (June 1967) 12–23.

We must understand that the critique of anthropomorphism goes far beyond the issue of religious belief, even beyond criticism of superstitions. On what grounds, then, in whose name does this critique occur? We cannot escape here the historical dimension of the problem, though that is not to imply a basis for that problem purely in history. The genealogy of anthropomorphism and its opponents matters. In fact, the denigration of anthropomorphic practices makes sense only from the turn of modern philosophy and science, with the advent of rationalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even today, the criticism of anthropomorphism in the sciences sounds undeniably like a disqualification.⁶ This is due to the new cosmology that developed in the seventeenth century. From Galileo and Newton (mathematization of nature, abstraction of space by a geometric idealism, homogenizing of all spaces, objectification of matter as *res extensa*, divisible into parts, etc.) to Descartes and Kant (foundation of the subject, distinguished from object, logical rule of mechanism and cause-effect relationship, status of representation, etc.), that new cosmology has striven for ever clearer, more emphatic distinctions among things, ideas, etc.—in short, between subject (observer) and object (world). But the intellectual deck has been stacked, and so anthropomorphism suddenly finds itself in a delicate position. For indeed, anthropomorphism became stigmatized once one distinguished the subject from the object, since that implied that the ‘world is lost’—i.e., that the world is no longer objectively accessible to scientific knowledge or subjectively to consciousness. In other words, anthropomorphism ceased to be viable as an intellectual norm once one refused to think of the subject and the object as products of nature, productions of the world. There remained nothing but a negative and poor way to conceive of anthropomorphism, making it a matter of projecting an already constituted subject—that sums it up—onto a world impenetrable in its supposed objectivity.⁷ One thus understands that after this modernity, or rather within the framework of this modernity, where subject and object are always already given, anthropomorphism could only appear as a sort of forcing—physical, psychic, natural—a little as if one wanted to force a grain of sand into a stone.

Moreover, it is within such a framework that some historians and anthropologists of religion operate when they attempt to think of anthropomorphism universally. But they do so at the expense of taking shortcuts, if not of making ethnological errors. Anthropomorphism is sometimes childish, sometimes a primary or primitive animism, or even confused with animism:

6 On this distinction, see Armangaud, “Anthropomorphisme” 284.

7 See Daston L. – Galison P., *Objectivity* (Cambridge: 2007).

[...] man unconsciously projects himself into the external world, describing and interpreting it in terms of his own psychic processes. The whole world is thus made alive and peopled with spirits who feel and behave as men do [...] In the beginning of human history, man's philosophies were wholly animistic; he diffused his psyche throughout the cosmos; he confused the self with the not-self at almost every point.⁸

Such an approach in fact fails to address the richest and most recent data of anthropology, which tend to show that animism is in fact fully opposed to anthropomorphism, at least to a projective anthropomorphism (from subject to object). Projective anthropomorphism advances a kind of perspectivism that does not ascribe any reality to substantial forms, preferring instead to see forms of relationships—the human form, in fact—and describing a relation of affinity (but among many other forms of relations, which have nothing of the human: such as the relationship between prey and predator, etc.).⁹ Here we see the smugness of rationalism in the face of cosmologies that are not concerned with crisply distinguishing subject and object. Nevertheless, the 'modern' scientists or philosophers become uncomfortable when it comes to thinking about the genesis of subject and object, self and not-self, psychic inferiority and physical externality, and so forth.

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Since the seventeenth century, this modern way of criticizing anthropomorphism has left very much intact an even more persistent and pernicious idol: an insidious anthropocentrism that dares not speak its name, but which, under the various forms of the subject—of humanity, of *Dasein*, etc.—only perpetuates this uncanny ability to take oneself for the center of the world, to think about the world with respect to oneself and not to one's own existence (origins, development, future, one's very death) in relation to the world. But the 'loss of the world' has been there—in truth, though, not for everyone. In the history of modern Western thought, some authors propound what Pierre Montebello has called a 'higher anthropomorphism',¹⁰ the paradoxical practice of radically criticizing furtive anthropocentrism.

⁸ See Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds* 67.

⁹ On this topic, see Viveiros de Castro E., "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, No. 3 (1998) 469–488; and Descola P., *Par delà nature et culture* (Paris: 2005).

¹⁰ See Montebello P., *L'autre métaphysique. Essai sur Ravaïsson, Tarde, Nietzsche et Bergson* (Paris: 2003) 12–13.

Spinoza, for example, can deal serious blows to anthropomorphism, particularly religious anthropomorphism, but at the same time he also addresses the concept of 'joy', which we experience in our human life and which names not only a human emotion but also an ontological power.¹¹ Nietzsche, for his part—and we know it too well—has certainly gone the furthest in the critique of anthropomorphism, to the point of unearthing human projection into the seemingly most foreign territory (the objectivity of matter, the 'laws of matter', etc.). But it is the same Nietzsche who proposes to extend our instinctive life to the totality of the world.¹² One could also mention Félix Ravaïsson-Mollien who attempts to do the same with repetitive effort, or Gabriel Tarde with desire and belief, to say nothing of Bergson's work on mental life.¹³ In all of these cases (which share their denial of the alleged Kantian 'Copernican revolution' and innocently perpetuate a philosophy of nature), the matter is to understand the world, to grasp the unity of the cosmos through direct, human experience. There is thus no contradiction between man and the world, humanity and cosmos; the real contradiction is between projective anthropomorphism and a 'higher anthropomorphism', based on the fact that the continuity of humanity and the world presumes, almost methodically, to start from our very experience of the world in order to think it:

The question obviously is not to extend man to the world, but to place man in the world. Tarde notes that there is as much complexity in the infinitesimal as in man. Nietzsche and Bergson detect the same 'inner essence' of being, to varying degrees, but without deprivation. This essence is effectively in us as it is everywhere, and it is in us because it is everywhere. In truth, higher anthropomorphism [...] says exactly the opposite of empirical anthropomorphism. To anthropomorphize in an empirical way is to project oneself into things, to see oneself exactly in the variety of the world. By contrast, the method of higher anthropomorphism suggests that one can find man in all things because he is similar in nature to all things, with varying degrees of difference which it will be necessary to explain by returning to the process of differentiation, to difference instantiating itself. What is man is thus in all things, not because

¹¹ On the critique of anthropomorphism in the seventeenth century, see in particular Minazzoli A., *L'homme sans image. Une anthropologie négative* (Paris: 1996).

¹² See the famous paragraph 36 of Nietzsche F., *Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: 2002) 37–38.

¹³ On these authors, see in particular Montebello, *L'autre métaphysique*.

it is in man, but because it is in all things. Higher anthropomorphism seizes man at his root: and his root is cosmos.¹⁴

The challenge is therefore to understand that inserting oneself into things is not necessarily synonymous with projection, insofar as it is just as much things which are in us, independent of our ability to think or represent them. How better to gain that understanding, then, if not precisely by positioning oneself with respect to an early modern chronology? The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries obviously did not invent the continuity of humanity-world, but they did situate humanity more firmly at the crossroads of all cosmic dimensions, all natural strata, granting it a more central place. As we know, the sheer scope of anthropomorphism in the Renaissance must be understood within an episteme of resemblance (Michel Foucault) defined by relationships of convenience, emulation, sympathy and analogy, according to which things are adjacent, thus imitating, attracting and assimilating themselves from one end to the other of the universe forming a great chain, at the core of which stands the human being as microcosm.¹⁵ This idea of the anthropomorphic microcosm—replete with the four elements and placed at the center of the Creation to recapitulate the whole of the ‘great chain of being’—has existed since Antiquity, but it underwent a major change during the Renaissance.¹⁶ It went from a general statement to a complex system relating the human body to the body of the world.

Thus, anthropomorphism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (though the cultural practice actually extends well into the seventeenth century) would be no less interesting because it was more literal, more attached to all kinds of ‘objects’. Instead, this delirium of sympathies, of analogies, of congruences amounts to nothing less than an increasingly insistent embedding of man within the cosmos. The recapitulation of the world within man does not say anything else. If the latter benefits from an ontological superiority, it is doubtless less by virtue of humanity’s position at the *top* of a classification than

¹⁴ Ibidem 13–14. One can not be unaware of Hans Jonas’s reinterpretation of anthropomorphism—an assumed anthropomorphism beyond the criticism of modern rationality. See Jonas H., “Note on Anthropomorphism”, in *The Phenomenon of Life. Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Chicago and London: 1982) 33–37.

¹⁵ See Foucault M., *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (1966) (London and New York: 1970) 17–45.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

because it is situated in the highest *degree*¹⁷ of an intensive scale, which makes humanity carry the variations of nature at the highest level: it is in the human that the world folds and wraps itself in infinite combinations. Early modernity thus offers a plethora of entirely anthropomorphic diagrams, botanical treatises, zoological studies, maps, alphabets, architecture motifs and collections of ornaments. Cosmological diagrams relating microcosm and macrocosm, for instance, evolved from the simple zodiacal man (divided into twelve parts connected by arrows to the astrological figures thought to govern every organ) into complex synoptic tables (e.g., those by Andrea Bacci, Robert Fludd, or Athanasius Kircher) which aspire to be true and scientific compendiums of the philosophy of man.¹⁸ If humanity is the *analogon* of the world, it is because the world is itself analogically structured.

Numerous treatises on philosophy and the ‘natural sciences’, among other subjects, are based on this conception. Charles de Bovelles’ *Liber de sapiente* (1509) develops a classification and comparison of the morphology of the various beings of creation based on the ideal figure of the human.¹⁹ Geoffroy Tory’s *Champfleury* (1529) compares the human body with the macrocosm and the letters of the alphabet, stating that everything can be brought back to singular and elementary principles whose ideal form is the model of the human body.²⁰ Pierre Belon opens his *Book of Birds* (1555) with a systematic comparative analysis of the skeleton of the human and that of the bird, using the Aristotelian and mathematical definition of analogy as a relationship between

¹⁷ That is to say, humanity is not a position, as in a discrete class within the totality of things, but rather the name of a way of being which then makes encounters, sympathies, and correspondances among things.

¹⁸ On this topic see in particular Saffrey H.-D., “L’homme-microcosme dans une estampe médico-philosophique du seizième siècle”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 57 (1994) 89–122.

¹⁹ Bovelles Charles de, *Liber de sapiente* (Paris, Henri Estienne: 1510). On analogy in Charles de Bovelles, see in particular Quillet P., “L’ontologie scalaire de Charles de Bovelles”, in Laporte M. – Margolin J.-C. (eds) *Charles de Bovelles en son cinquième centenaire 1479–1979* (Paris: 1982) 171–179.

²⁰ Tory Geoffroy, *Champfleury. Au quel est contenu l’Art & Science de la deue & vraye Proportion des Lettres Attiques, qu’on dit autrement Lettres Antiques, & vulgairement Lettres Romaines proportionnees selon le Corps & Visage humain* (Paris, Giles Gourmond: 1529). On analogy and anthropomorphism in Geoffroy Tory’s *Champfleury*, see in particular Dubois G., “Corps de la lettre et sexe des nombres. L’imagination de la forme dans le traité de Geoffroy Tory sur la Vraye proportion des lettres”, *Revue des Sciences humaines* 179 (1980) 77–91.

two or more proportions.²¹ Ambroise Paré recalls, in his *Discourse on Animals and the Excellence of Man*, that the ancients ‘called man an earthly God, God of the animals, messenger of the Divine and Lord of the lower things’.²² He thus underlines, as did Pierre Charron in his *Book of Wisdom* (1601), the value of recapitulation and of the mediator man-microcosm, who is ‘the knot, the median and the link between angels and animals, the celestial and terrestrial, spiritual and physical things’.²³ Perhaps anthropomorphism goes hand in hand with anthropocentrism, but it is within the framework of the universal horizontal analogy structuring the world that the vertical analogy of man-microcosm takes on its full meaning.²⁴ As a relational system and general comparison,²⁵ analogy also refers to a process of revealing hidden meanings.

The authors of the sixteenth century who etymologically link analogy to the idea of order—the Latin equivalent of analogy is *proportio*—also exploit the various meanings of the prefix ‘ana’, which one finds in the terms indicating rebirth or appearance, such as ‘Venus ana-diomene’, or ‘emerging from the darkness of the sea’. As a way of knowing established on a strong sense of order, analogy allows progress toward a fuller understanding: Bovelles describes

²¹ Aristotle defines analogy as ‘similarity established between two or more parts’ (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1131). Pierre Belon du Mans expounds the Aristotelian analogy of proportion (a is to b, what c is to d) in his “History of Nature Bird” when he compares the skeleton of the bird and that of man; see *L'histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (Paris, Cavellat: 1555). The logic and mathematical concept of the analogy led to the plotting of rigorously precise scalar analogies between the human world and the diverse fields of the cosmos. On analogy in Renaissance thought, see in particular Foucault, *Order of Things* 17–45; Tripet A., “Aspects de l'analogie à la Renaissance”, *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance* 39 (1977) 7–21; Gadoffre G., *Les hommes de la Renaissance et l'analogie* (Loches: 1976); Céard J., *Analogie et zoologie chez les naturalistes de la Renaissance* (Paris: 1980); Randall M., *Building Resemblance: Analogical Imagery in the Early French Renaissance* (Baltimore: 1996); and Chaptal J., *Renaissance et Baroque. Les charmes de l'analogie* (Paris: 2012).

²² Quoted in Céard J., *La nature et les prodiges. L'insolite au XVI^e siècle* (Geneva: 1970) 101.

²³ Quoted in Céard J., “In homine quodam modo sunt omnia”: récapitulation et analogie à la Renaissance”, in Gorris Camos R. (ed.), *Macrocosmo, microcosmo. Scrivere e pensare il mondo nel Cinquecento tra Italia e Francia* (Fasano: 2004) 14.

²⁴ On the idea of vertical analogy between terrestrial and celestial things through man-microcosm who ‘completes and crowns the horizontal analogy structuring the world’, see Céard J., “In homine” 15.

²⁵ See Céard, “In homine” 17, which uses the term ‘universal analogy’: ‘C'est dans le cadre de cette analogie universelle que la thèse de l'homme-microcosme prend tout son sens. L'homme est comme le lieu où se rassemble, sans s'y appauvrir, toute la diversité du monde, et en même temps, l'être qui, en la réunissant de manière cohérente, manifeste l'ordre profond qui l'organise’.

analogy as ‘elevating’, for instance, and Erasmus compares it with the ‘anagogy’, designating spiritual illumination in exegesis.²⁶ Humanity in the Renaissance is both model of and actor in this quest for knowledge: the wise man, writes Bovelles, travels through the world as a pilgrim of unity.²⁷ Analogy has the power to bring forth truth from resemblance and to produce an image that strikes the mind, imprinting itself more strongly than any speech. Therefore, the prominent place given to sight and visual comparison in the arts and in numerous books is fully understandable. The fish-monks and fish-bishops described by Pierre Belon, Ambroise Cardan, Jérôme Cardan, and Guillaume Rondelet are signs (*monstra*) of the hidden order that governs both the submarine world and the world of humanity.²⁸ The engravings of Giambattista della Porta—who, in his *Phytognomonica*, observes that plants, like humans, produce milk and saliva, possess nerves, flesh, veins, bones and hair—demonstrate the conviction that visible analogies are *signatures* which reveal an invisible therapeutic knowledge, detectable to the gaze leveled analogically on humanity and plants.²⁹

Early modern anthropomorphism does more than merely suggest the idea of multiple correlations between microcosm and macrocosm. The human body also provided a model with respect to which artists and art theorists claimed to fashion human creations. ‘All the products of art and reason must take the human body as a model, well formed and proportioned’, writes the architect Francesco di Giorgio Martini (citing Vitruvius). Martini’s treatise begins (in a manner reminiscent of Pierre Belon’s *Book of Birds*) with an analogy between the human skeleton and the structure of a building, an analogy that then extends to each constituent part of the body.³⁰ The very literal anthropomorphism that characterizes most Pythagorean Renaissance treatises—relating architecture to the divine proportions of the human body—

²⁶ See Margolin J.-C., “L’Analogie dans la pensée d’Erasme”, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 69 (1978) 24–50.

²⁷ The possibility of explaining the world’s infinite variety by bringing it back to a finite and familiar model makes clear the success of the analogous anthropomorphic model. As rightly noted by Leonard Barkan in his *Nature’s Work of Art*, anthropomorphism is the answer the Renaissance brings to the traditional question of *discordia concors*. See Barkan L., *Nature’s Work of Art. The Human Body as Image of the World* (New Haven – London: 1975) 16, 117, 133, 140.

²⁸ See in particular Céard, *La nature et les prodiges* 229–312.

²⁹ Ibidem 229–251; Foucault, *The Order of Things* 40–45.

³⁰ Martini Francesco di Giorgio, *Trattati di Architettura, Ingegneria e Arte militare*, ed. C. Maltesse, vol. 1 (Milano: 1967) 3. On anthropomorphism in early modern architecture and architectural theory, see in particular Barkan, *Nature’s Work of Art* 116–174.

yields gradually to a figurative and ornamental anthropomorphism that proliferates on columns, porticos and façades, eventually culminating in the anthropomorphic ornaments of Christoph Jamnitzer and Giovanni Battista Braccelli.³¹

Moreover, one should not neglect the transitive dimension of anthropomorphism: it not only constitutes knowledge, but is also constitutive of knowledge; not only does it suppose a vision of the world, it also makes possible a knowledge of this same world. Such was also the intention of the Foucauldian enterprise in *The Order of Things*: not so much to report ‘worldviews’ as to seize *epistemes*—i.e., the historical conditions governing what is knowable, which give shape to a subterranean knowledge—since Foucault’s concept of episteme deals less with thoughts than with what is thinkable at a certain time and in a certain place. Anthropomorphism can thus be assimilated to exegetical and hermeneutical processes, especially those to be found in the visual arts.

In the wake of Foucault’s remarks on the episteme of resemblance in the sixteenth century, numerous studies have shed new light on the relation between analogy and anthropomorphism in literature, art, theology and science from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. But the coexistence of various anthropomorphic models—no less than the evolution from a literal anthropomorphic model (with rational, cosmological, medical and mathematical pretenses) to more critical and metaphorical approaches—still raises important questions about anthropomorphism as a cultural practice during that extraordinarily fecund period. Our goal in this volume is to address some of those questions—about the didactic, historical, and hermeneutic challenges of anthropomorphism—from a range of disciplinary perspectives, to map the still-unfamiliar territory of this particularly ambivalent form of analogy.

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³¹ Although mainly devoted to anthropomorphism in English Renaissance literature, Leonard Barkan’s book, *Nature’s Work of Art*, is the only comprehensive work on this phenomenon for the Early Modern period. An important contribution of Barkan’s book is the idea of an evolution from a literal and rational anthropomorphism toward more poetic and metaphoric operations. This highlights the various meanings and uses of anthropomorphism during that period, but at the same time, the author makes a very wide use of the idea of poetic anthropomorphism, considered only as a matter of metaphor and ranking in the same category the ideas of myth and mysticism: ‘It has become clear that through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the literal analogy of man’s body with the world’s moved farther and farther out of the mainstream of philosophical and scientific thought, and toward myth and mysticism. The more out-of-date the idea becomes as science, the richer it is as a convention between poet and audience’ (*ibidem* 48).

With that in mind, this volume follows a two-part structure. The first half pertains to the broader cultural operations anthropomorphism performed in the early modern era, operations that the volume explores in three groups of essays. The first group pertains to anthropomorphism and the boundaries of the human. We begin with an essay by Anne-Laure van Bruaene. Drawing on a wealth of cases involving both zoomorphized humans and anthropomorphized animals, Van Bruaene examines the use of beasts as metaphors for political and religious groups during the Dutch Revolt. Whether the product of peasants or of *rederijkers*, such redescriptions depended on a range of factors, from homophony (e.g., associating calves with Calvinists) to general prejudice (e.g., ridiculing the Catholic clergy by equating their behavior with the presumed venality of foxes) to rough visual resemblance (the *Leo Belgicus*). However, Van Bruaene notes an important tendency in Netherlandish satire: that of animalizing opponents, rather than demonizing them. The result, she suggests, was more complex than simply “othering” a particularly troublesome group of people. It also provided a means for comprehending tremendous economic, political, and religious upheaval. Consequently, anthropomorphism and zoomorphism in the context of political discourse comprised quite literally a battle of wits for a culture *in extremis*.

Next comes an essay by Christina Normore, who discusses the complicated parallelism of human and simian in the later fifteenth-century Burgundian *milieu*. Normore begins with the zoomorphization of boorish human behavior, such as one finds in the 1468 marriage celebration of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York, which included performers masquerading as unruly simians, which served in turn as stand-ins for degenerate men. Normore notes, however, that the performance of such roles was more than simply an obvious representation of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. The lavishness of the celebration—its costumes, its sets, and even its performers’ actions—was designed to provoke admiration, even as it denigrated supposedly uncouth comportment. Recognizing the fundamental ambivalence of this situation, Normore suggests that, by treading a fine line between stupid and clever, simians in the Burgundian *milieu* thus explored not only the social importance of intellect, but also the elusive character of that capacity.

Paul Smith closely examines Rabelais’s approach to anthropomorphosis in the five novels comprised by his *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*. Smith attends to a four-fold typology of the dynamic relations between landscape and the human body, as ‘bodied’ forth in Books 1 to 3: metaphorical analogy of space (as *comparandum*) to the body (as *comparans*), and conversely, of the body (as *comparandum*) to space (as *comparans*); anthropization, in which the human body exercises a clearly discernible effect of its environment, often resulting

in a relation of resemblance; and conversely, ‘environmental determinism’, in which the environment exercises a discernible effect on its inhabitants, again resulting, more often than not, in a relation of resemblance. As Smith shows, however, the heterotopias visited in the *Fourth Book* and the virtually indescribable islands visited in the *Fifth Book* complicate or even contravene this typology, no more so than on the Island of Satin where everything is subsumed into pictorial representation, and neither *comparans* nor *comparandum* can be construed as real.

This subsection of the volume closes with an essay by Miya Tokumitsu on the figuring of cultural and geographical difference through images of cannibalism. Tokumitsu argues that, insofar as consumption of the body equals annihilation (cf. the essays by Heuer and Silver elsewhere in the volume), using the cannibal to embody distant continents and cultures enabled an investigation of the limits of what was deemed recognizably human—i.e., civilized, according to sixteenth-century European norms—behavior. However, as Tokumitsu also notes, where used to embody distant, poorly understood lands, the monstrous anthropoid also served as a stand-in for annihilation of a very different sort: that meted out by a newly expansive world now bounded by implacable environmental extremes. Consequently, the cannibal came to embody more than simply threatening differences of geography, race, culture, and even class. It also became the face of oblivion itself.

The next group of essays attends to the construction of emotion as a fundamental component of the self. First comes an essay by Nathalie de Brézé, which takes as its focus later sixteenth-century printed depictions of the soul. De Brézé attends to the utility of anthropomorphic (as opposed to zoomorphic) depictions of the soul in later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed images. Such depictions matter, not least because they necessarily call into question the relationship of body and soul at death. (Pieter van der Borcht, for instance, depicted the body as in essence a crude vehicle for the soul, something to be stripped away after death; and the soul as figure, the nudity of which indicates its equality with all others in the eyes of God.) De Brézé also notes the potential for identification on the part of viewers contributed to the appeal of such imagery. She points out, for instance, that Otto Vaenius (among others) employed the anthropomorphic soul in his prints as something of a double for the viewer.

Second, Marisa Bass investigates a cluster of compositions that feature prominent human figures in Joris Hoefnagel’s 1569 volume *Patience*. Discussing the volume in the context of Hoefnagel’s time in England, she argues that the volume served a relatively small audience of fellow Netherlandish expatriates, for whom the decision to figure patience anthropomorphically was a witty, in

some respects even ambivalent, invitation to meditate on the complexities of the topic. The result, she suggests, were figures that transcended the abstract nature of allegory to express it in a richer, more deeply social way. Presenting the viewer with a series of remarkably subtle interpretive challenges, those figures thus instantiated patience by cultivating a simultaneously empathic and considered experience of it.

And third, Aneta Georgievska-Shine writes about seventeenth-century friendship books as exercises in the imagination of humanist communities. That imagination, she suggests, occurred through the performance of sociable interpretation among friends, who appear as one another's second selves. The resulting self-fashioning is both a spatial operation, linking people across distances, and a temporal one, extending friendship beyond the brief flicker of an individual life. Discernment and wit proved especially important, as marks on the page were thought to attest to the personality that produced them, varying not only over time but also depending on context and content. Consequently, she argues, the medium of the *album amicorum* was believed to provide a relatively pure, even unmediated image (*simplex imago*) of the self that contributed to it. No less important, that variability of marks and texts created an interpretive playing field on which erudite observers could continually instantiate their friendship—either in person or, in the book itself, by proxy—through virtuoso interpretive performance.

The cluster of essays that follows addresses the use of anthropomorphism as a tool for articulating identity on a large scale (regional, linguistic, ethnic, and so forth). At the heart of the first essay, by Pamela Brekka, lies the decision by Benito Arias Montano (1527–1598) to use typology as a mechanism for asserting political, regional, and religious identity in Counter-Reformation Spain. Particularly noteworthy are anthropomorphized beams of the Mosaic tabernacle, which Montano used to create an exegetical contrast between Old Law (manufactured, anthropomorphic) and New (the *non manufatum*, free of resemblance). Brekka suggests that, placing artistry, a product of post-lapsarian industry, in contrast with the world, divine in origin, Montano implied that rebellious lands were in essence malformed echoes of a proper—sc., Catholic—order emanating from the person of Philip II of Spain.

Sarah Kyle who considers the anthropomorphizing functions of the heraldic devices featured prominently within a group of late-fourteenth-century manuscripts commissioned by Francesco II 'il Novello' da Carrara of Padua. These heraldic portraits operated within a discursive community of commemorative *libri*, such as Pier Paolo Vergerio's *Book of Carrara Princes and their Deeds* and Lazzaro de' Malrotondi da Conegliano's *Book of Shields of the Carraresi Lords*, that utilize rhetorical tropes codified by Cicero and Quintilian to convert the family's heraldic insignia into anecdotal evocations of princely

character. The most innovative of Francesco Novello's manuscripts, the *Carrara Herbal*, attaches botanical specimens, variously rendered in both imitative and non-imitative ways, to the patron's repertory of personal and familial heraldry, signalling his distinctive commitment to the acquisition of medical knowledge. For the Carrara, as Kyle argues, heraldic usage was both symbolic and anthropomorphic: more than a marker of property, it underscored princely authority by prompting the reader-viewer to visualize a characterful image of the Lords of Carrara.

Elke Werner writes about the rise of female personifications of Europe in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These personifications, she argues, arose from deep-seated anxieties borne primarily of political and religious conflict. Of particular importance for Werner's essay is the gendering of cultural traits, which are defined either as muscularly virtuous and in the ascendant (e.g., in images of *europa triumphans*) or as delicate and in need of putatively masculine (i.e., politically acceptable) defense. Playing on a long history of images of ideal women, such personifications thus served to arouse a kind of courtly response in the viewer that would align him with a broader, idealized Christian European identity.

The second half of this volume pertains to the basic semiotic problems raised by figuration as a cultural practice. First, Walter Melion discusses two large prints of whales beached in the vicinity of Haarlem between 1598 and 1601. These prints allow him to investigate when and why certain types of image seemingly ripe for viewing through an anthropomorphic lens, instead proved resistant to such a reading. Engraved by Jacob Matham, these two plates, the first of which translates a drawing done after the life by Hendrick Goltzius, the second a drawing by Matham himself, contain inscriptions in Latin and Dutch, the former by Theodorus Scovelius, the latter by Karel van Mander, that respectively humanize the depicted specimens by construing them as political portents (Scovelius) and contravene such an interpretation by insisting that they be seen not as omens but as natural prodigies and indices of divine artifice (Van Mander). Melion explores some of the religious and political circumstances, as well as discursive and performative practices, which can be seen to complement the kind of response advocated by Van Mander. In conclusion, by reference to one of Goltzius's greatest *poëterijen* (poetic fictions), the *Venus, Bacchus, and Ceres* of 1593, he asks when and how it proved possible for Goltzius, Van Mander, Matham, and their circle to indulge in the impulse to anthropomorphize or, more precisely, both to humanize and divinize a natural prodigy.

Next, Ralph Dekoninck discusses the history of how people have understood, and at times misunderstood, anthropomorphic metonymy from Augustine to Noël-Antoine Pluche. The crux of the matter for these authors

was the relationship between the literal and the metaphorical, the perceptible and the comprehensible. As Dekoninck notes, critics generally reserved their ire for those who excessively court or engage in the former. Augustine, for instance, suggested that his ancient forebears had erred by mistaking gifts from God (e.g., intellect, emotion, and the like) for gods themselves. Worse, at least for Augustine, was the potential for the human form to cultivate idolatrous behavior, insofar as anthropomorphic imagery implicitly defined the body as a vessel to be endowed with the soul. By the seventeenth century, however, a shift had occurred, according to which anthropomorphic imagery, both verbal and visual, was a way to render concepts and other elusive entities perceptible, while those entities endowed imagery with a kind of life (i.e., interpretive vitality).

The next two essays attend to figuration as a kind of impossibility—the veiling, not of the invisible,³² but of the wholly non-existent, even of oblivion itself. First, Christopher Heuer writes about how the character of *Nemo* (Nobody) served to interrogate the dynamism of personification in the early sixteenth century, insofar as it destabilized reference by depicting a person—no-one—who does not exist. Referring to the sixteenth-century rise of naming as a technology of social control, Heuer notes that, for early modern Netherlandish and German cultures, *Nemo* was a floating boundary figure that served largely as a vehicle for identifying and negating unacceptable economic and social traits. By way of contrast, he then frames Bruegel's various nobodies as more specifically reflexive entities—in essence, devices for interrogating signification itself.

Next, Larry Silver addresses what he calls an 'active, hostile anthropomorphism' in the *Triumph of Death* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Eschewing divinity from his depiction of the subject, Bruegel instead concentrates our attention on the sheer wealth of paths by which humanity arrives at its single, inevitable terminus; no less important, relegating the infernal to a small, if central, portion of the composition, Bruegel ironically apotheosizes anthropomorphized death at the pictorial expense of all else. The resulting image contrasts starkly with much humanist discourse: where fame, monuments, and texts may preserve the memory of greatness, death will inevitably, inexorably, unfailingly consume all else. In this respect, Silver suggests, that image has an important point of contact with one of Bruegel's other flirtations with universality and

³² Cf. Krüger K., *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren. Ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der Frühen Neuzeit in Italien* (Munich: 2001).

nullity: *Elck* (1558). In both painting and print, the artist employs anthropomorphism to delineate the boundaries of universality and oblivion.

The subsequent two essays then address the potentialities of anthropomorphism, beginning with an essay by Elizabeth Petcu, who writes about anthropomorphism as a means for artistic self-validation. Of particular importance for her essay are architects at the court of Rudolph II, who worked to refine a later sixteenth-century visual anthropomorphism of orders (as opposed to long-standing textual or verbal traditions). At the heart of her essay lies decorum, which, she demonstrates, served as component of architectural rhetoric, not just a principle governing the discipline's visual vocabulary. Given this, she notes, many architects exploited an important interpretive richness of the orders that stemmed from a dual expectation of discernment and subtlety on the part of viewers. The result was a system in which deft expression—sc., strategic deviation from the rules governing that system—allowed the motions of an architect's (or patron's) mind to come across as fully as possible to the viewer. As a result, Petcu suggests, anthropomorphism enabled the discourse of architectural expression to correspond increasingly to that which had governed the figural arts more generally.

Next, an essay by Bertrand Prévost addresses the idea of Face/Landscape (*Visage/Paysage*), a conception that refers not only to the development of pictorial 'genres' but also to more profoundly aesthetic functions, sc., finding an ideal figure with which to embody a given concept. Building on the theoretical work of Deleuze and Guattari, he uses the term 'Landscape' to denote the extension of painting (in the classical sense of *extensio*), and consequently to its divisibility in equivalent parts; likewise, he employs 'Face' to evoke the force of a presence. The essay attends especially closely to Christian images, which have a long tradition of claiming the ability to visualize Christ's Face in everything—even (or perhaps above all) when a face is no more recognizable—as much as they have developed 'Christ landscapes' in order to provide a meditative path for the devotee.

The last two essays discuss anthropomorphic imagery as a prompt to metamorphic interpretation—i.e., hermeneutic experiences that would result in transformation of the viewer. First, addressing the motif of sexual interest in early sixteenth-century Netherlandish visual culture, Bret Rothstein discusses a number of anatomical metonyms—some fairly obvious, others debatable—in Jan van Hemessen's (1536) *Prodigal Son*. The fact of such metonyms, he suggests, is less noteworthy than the range of interpretive viability they present. Drawing on contemporaneous vernacular song, he notes that anthropomorphic substitution seems to have formed the basis for remarkably sophisticated

language games. Similarly, Rothstein argues, artists such as Hemessen used interpretive substitution and its handmaid, vagueness, to destabilize pictorial representation, treating the picture less an exercise in mimetic recapitulation than one of parabolic admonition.

And finally, Michel Weemans analyzes the ambiguous anthropomorphic smoke in the '*Sacrifice of Cain and Abel*', one of Karel van Mallery's engravings for Louis Richeome's *Holy Pictures* (1601). Beyond the mere historical meaning, Mallery's engraving elaborates a complex visual exegesis in which the anthropomorphic or christomorphic smoke plays a critically important role. Mallery's image is related to the Christian notion of *figure* (theorized by Richeome in the prologue of his book), which operates by means of semiotic displacement and is defined by biblical typology as the shadow that finds its completion in Christ. It is also connected to the interest of Early Modern authors and artists in the 'natural image' (i.e., the mimetic object somehow generated by natural forces). No less important, Richeome's notion of *figure* also bears on how we understand earlier Flemish artists, who used double images to stimulate the speculative vision of the spectator, in essence cultivating religious metamorphosis through hermeneutic volatility. Mallery's 'double image' thus invites us to rethink the (inter)dependence between the three components (the engraved image, the ekphrasis and the exposition of the mystical meaning) of the 'Holy Pictures' which Richeome qualifies as 'triple images'.