

The World of Bruegel in Black and White
from the Collection of the Royal Library of Belgium

[Exhibition]

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The Iconography of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Temperance*

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I. *Temperance* (fig. 1, cat. 54) in Bruegel's "Seven Virtues" series

Bruegel produced the preparatory drawings for the "Seven Virtues" between 1559 and 1560. These were published by Hieronymus Cock, the largest print publisher in Antwerp. The series represents the three Theological Virtues: *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*, and the four Cardinal Virtues: *Justice*, *Fortitude*, *Prudence*, and *Temperance*. *Temperance* was published together with *Fortitude* c. 1560. Bruegel's drawings for the "Seven Vices" series were engraved by Pieter van der Heyden, while the "Seven Virtues" series was engraved by Philips Galle, an engraver with markedly higher skills than van der Heyden.

Temperance was chosen as the subject of this study because I consider *Temperance*, among the prints of the *Seven Virtues* series, to be most reflective of Bruegel's concept of human beings. Bruegel combines *Temperance* with the Seven Liberal Arts, and it is important to point out that Grammar, Music, Rhetoric, and Dialectic are associated with humanistic concepts, while Arithmetic, Music and Geometry are associated with common everyday life. The other prints in Bruegel's "Seven Virtues" series – *Faith*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Prudence*, *Justice* and *Fortitude* – concentrate on how a Christian could follow moral practice in daily life. In fact all human activities strengthen the nature of the Virtue. In contrast those of the Seven Liberal Arts in *Temperance* are targets of satire and examples of behavior to be improved by *Temperance*. Further, the iconography of the Seven Liberal Arts in *Temperance* departs fundamentally from that of Bruegel's contemporaries such as Maarten van Heemskerck and Frans Floris. The Seven Liberal Arts had been considered, since the time of St. Augustine, as sciences essential to reaching a correct understanding of the Bible, and Bruegel's contemporaries mainly followed this traditional philosophy, portraying the Seven Liberal Arts as a means of acquiring the classical learning that was so highly evaluated during the Renaissance.

The main work discussed in this essay is the *Temperance* engraving of c. 1560 (fig. 2), after Pieter Bruegel's drawing (fig. 1), from the collection of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. In the drawing, Bruegel's *Temperance* has been rendered as "Temperancia," but the correct Latin word "Temperantia" is inscribed on the print. The word "Temperancia," though, appears on prints of a good number of later artists, and may not have been considered incorrect at the time (fig. 19). I refer to the *Temperance* engraving rather than the drawing because most related works to this subject are engravings.



fig. 1 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Temperance*, 1560, drawing, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen



fig. 2 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Temperance*, c. 1560, engraving, cat. 54

II. The Inscription on *Temperance*

The following is inscribed in Latin in the lower margin of Bruegel's *Temperance*:

We must look to it that we neither, given over to sensual pleasures, appear wasteful, and luxuriant, nor, held by miserliness, live in filth and ignorance, in the devotion to sensual pleasures, we do not become wasteful and luxuriant, but also that we do not, because of miserly greed, live in filth and ignorance.¹⁾

Cock commissioned humanists to write inscriptions in Latin (it is also supposed he sometimes wrote some Latin texts by himself) for his well-educated clientele when subjects were on Christianity or Humanism. For works with wider popular appeal, like *The Kermis at Hoboken* (cat. 109) or *The Kermis of St George* (cat. 110), inscriptions would have been in Dutch and French or, in many cases, in Dutch only. The inscription on *Temperance* and other works of the Seven Virtues series were in Latin because of the subject matter being related to Christianity.

I would like to point out here that most of the inscriptions for the "Seven Virtues" series touched directly on the iconography of the prints. However, in the case of *Temperance* alone, the text has to do rather with a conventional or general understanding of the subject of the virtue. Temperance is described in Dominican friar Lorens d'Orleans' *Somme des Vices et des Vertues* (*The Book of Vices and Virtues*) from the 13th century as follows: "The virtue of temperance has three offices. For a heart that has that virtue sees nothing, knows nothing to do that he may repent himself of. In nothing he trespasses the law of measure; he is under the law of reason: he lies down and hides all the covetousness of the world; that is to say, who has that virtue keeps him that he be not broken nor defaulted in the three things that injure the world, as Saint John says: sin of the flesh, pride of the heart, covetousness."²⁾

The Latin inscription on Bruegel's *Temperance* differs from the pictorial image. It is possible to suppose that D. V. Coornhert, a contemporary of Bruegel wrote the Latin text. Coornhert earned his living at Cock's Aux Quatre Vents shop as an engraver, and had done many plates from drawings by Maarten van Heemskerck. He was also the teacher of Philips Galle who was one of the main engravers for Bruegel prints. In addition, Coornhert was active as a Haarlem politician, philosopher and author of books on ethics. The chapter on Temperance in his *Zedekunst, dat is Wellevenskunste* (*Ethics, That is the Art of Living Well*) (1586), re-iterates conventional medieval concepts, but also presents new ideas focusing on moral practices in daily life.³⁾

It may be that Cock informed the writer of the Latin inscription for Bruegel's *Temperance* only of the theme and not the pictorial context of the print. Coornhert's "Theory on Temperance" conveyed the moral view of the time. He begins with the premise "Temperance is a virtue that governs restraint of body and soul." He next touches on physical desire, namely Lust and Gluttony. He states "Temperance is the enemy of Gluttony and Lust, and friend to their opposition," or "Temperance supports the desire to be virtuous, and destroys the desire to sin; it controls desire for pleasures of the flesh," and remarks on the role of Temperance in the pursuit of becoming a good Christian, "The fruit of Temperance is closeness to God." While questioning the extent to which a human being can act

correctly through the practice of Temperance, he writes "Temperance leads one to virtue and away from sin, to control over the pleasures of the flesh, and to maintenance of physical well being." He further states that the measure of what is necessary for human satisfaction is "to eat, to moisten the throat, and to be protected from the cold," and he admonishes against excess with "not drinking or eating enough is less harmful than eating and drinking too much." Coornhert considers "Truth and Wisdom" to be necessary means to reach the exercise of moderation and with his interpretation "Wisdom is the eyes of Temperance," he concludes that "A person of discipline can control all his actions and achieve self-regulation through rational moderation." (see footnote 3) As will be pointed out in the discussion below on the importance of moderation and restraint, Coornhert would have been influenced by classical theories of philosophy and ethics such as found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

III. Attributes of the Personification of the Virtue in Bruegel's *Temperance*

The personification of *Temperance* (fig. 3), standing at the center of the composition, wears a long robe with fur trim at the collar and right cuff, and pointed shoes ('snavelshoenen') that were popular at the Burgundy court in the late the 15th century. This attire emphasizes the fact that nobility did need not to walk, being always transported by horse. Aside from these details though, Bruegel's *Temperance* exhibits attributes of the Virtue conventional since the mid-15th century:

- Clock: positioned on the head of Temperance, symbolizes observance of time and a regulated life. H. Arthur Klein gives the negative interpretation "Time is always wasted."⁴⁾ In the present paper, however, all the symbolism of the Temperance attributes will be viewed as positive.
- Bit: attached to the mouth of Temperance, to prevent speaking ill of others.



fig. 3
Bruegel, personification of
Temperance (detail of fig. 2)

- Reins: in her right hand, to control excess.
 Eyeglasses: in her left hand, to clearly see the good and the bad. According to van Gelder and Borms, the proverb "iemand een bril op den neus zetten" (putting eyeglasses on people's noses) signifies controlling people, although they consider nevertheless the use of eyeglasses as the means of 'vision'.⁷⁵
 Live Snake: wrapped around her hips, symbolizes "wisdom" ("Sapientia") (to be discussed in section IV-5, below).
 Spurs: attached to her shoes, to make a lazy mind diligent.
 Windmill: under her feet, the vane of a windmill, an apparatus to grind flour for bread, signifies control in one's life. Klein views it as "human ingenuity to get benefit from freely blowing wind."⁷⁶
 Ball: A rolling stone ball behind Temperance, recalls 'Sottebollen' (foolish heads) depicted in Bruegel's print *Festival of Fools* (cat. 77) and although the actual meaning is uncertain, it can be suggested that Temperance controls foolish action.

Except for the stone ball and the live snake, Bruegel's *Temperance* exhibits attributes that had been precisely described in a mid-fifteenth century French manuscript. This will be discussed further in section IV below.

IV. History of the Attributes of Temperance – clock, bit, reins, eyeglasses, live snake, spurs, windmill, stone ball – in the Late Middle Ages and the Northern Renaissance

There are examples of personified images of Temperance in the Middle Ages with no attributes at all, indicated only with the word "Temperantia".⁷⁷ Temperance is depicted, along with Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, and Patience in a house-shaped reliquary (fig. 4) from the Meuse region of present Belgium in the latter half of the 12th century, but none of the Virtues is shown with attributes. In the vast majority of historical examples, Temperance has a wine cup in one hand and a pitcher of water in the other (fig. 5).⁷⁸ Diluting



fig. 4 *Temperance* (on the side of a house-shaped reliquary), second half of the 12th century, Saint-Ghislain de Martin



fig. 5 *Cardinal Friedrich and Quatre Vertus*, c. 1130, *Lektionary*, Cologne, Cathedral



fig. 6 I. H. Wierix, *Temperance*, 1579, engraving



fig. 7 Cornelis Massys, *Temperance*, c. 1544-1556, engraving

alcohol with water had been a custom since ancient Greek times, either to avoid drunkenness or as a health measure. There are many examples of this image in the arts – sculpture, painting, prints, stained glass, tapestries, etc. – of 16th century Netherlands, and the most prevalent was as an attribute of Temperance (fig. 6).

Giotto's Scrovegni Chapel (c. 1305-07) *Temperance* holds a sheathed sword, secured tightly with a rope, as an attribute signifying suppression of wrath. Andrea Orcagna's *Temperance* from the 14th century in Or San Michel, Florence, has a pair of compasses as her attribute.⁷⁹ It is speculated that Maarten van Heemskerck, member of the "Wijngaardranken" (Vines of Vineyard), rhetorician chamber in Haarlem, added the compass and T-square as attributes when he painted the insignia decoration on *Temperance's* shield.⁸⁰

In Ambrogio Lorenzetti's mid-14th century fresco in the hall of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, *Temperance*, presented along with the other Virtues, holds a large hourglass in her right hand, her left forefinger pointing to it. This attribute appears again in the 16th century print (fig. 7) by Cornelis Massys using his monogram, CMA for the print. TEMPERANCIA is inscribed at the bottom of the composition, but the addition of a skull and a round ball along with the hourglass possibly indicates a deeper meaning. The hourglass and skull imply inevitable death; the ball rolling on the ground has been interpreted to be fate determining time death. The lesson is that man, constantly facing his own death, should walk the road of moderation.

The replacement of the hourglass with a clock as a new Temperance attribute reflects the advance of technology and miniaturization in the Middle Ages. In the 16th century, tools of Wisdom – a mirror, a sieve, and a sarcophagus – were sometimes expressed as attributes of Temperance. Occasionally, Temperance would hold keys, or be shown together with a fish (Frans Floris) or an elephant. For the purpose of this paper, we will center on the attributes used in Bruegel's *Temperance*, and consider others to be outside the discussion.

IV-1. Temperance in Illuminated Manuscripts from the mid-15th Century

R. Tuve (1963) pointed out that the personification of *Temperance* in *Livre des quatre vertus* of 1450 already had a clock, bit, reins, and eyeglasses, and was standing on a windmill vane.⁸¹ She is shown together with three attendants, *Continence* (restraint), *Clemence*

(generosity), and *Moderance* (moderation) holding streamers.

In 1452, the Rouen City Council published the French translation with an accompanying commentary of Aristotle's *Ethics* to celebrate the original author Nicole Oresme (c. 1320–1377). It was a highly decorated illuminated manuscript in his honor. In the second section, Temperance stands at the center of a row of personifications of the Seven Virtues. In this manuscript, *Temperance* is portrayed as having a pivotal role among the virtues. In chapter six of the second book of Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Arete, or Virtue, is

defined as equated with the mean, namely, Moderation. "Now feelings and actions are the objects with which virtue is concerned; in feelings and actions excess and deficiency are errors, while the mean amount is praised, and constitutes success; and to be praised and to be successful are both marks of virtue. Virtue, therefore, is a mean state in the sense that it is able to hit the mean."¹² Indeed, there can be no excess or deficiency in temperance and justice. In chapter 7, in reference to pleasures and pains, Aristotle defines "The observance of the mean is Temperance, and the excess Profligacy In regard to giving and getting money, the observance of the mean is Liberality; the excess and deficiency are Prodigality and Meanness In respect of honour and dishonour, the observance of the mean is Greatness of Soul, the excess a sort of Vanity, as it may be called, and the deficiency, Smallness of Soul."¹³ Considering this, the Seven Vices, as viewed from the Middle Ages forward, can be viewed as representing excess – Wrath, Greed, Pride, Lust, Envy, Gluttony – and deficiency, Sloth being deficiency of effort. Moderation would be an important Virtue to prevent such crimes.

Aristotle's philosophy is also noted in the inscription on a monochrome print titled 'Temperance' by Italian painter Cesare Roverdino (monogram CRE). The upper part of Temperance's body is unclothed and she holds pitchers of the same shape in each hand. A camel sits beside her. The inscription in Latin at the bottom reads "Temperance is the moderation of one's desires in obedience to reason" (TEMPERANTIA EST MODERATIO CUPIDITATUM OBEDIENS).

In his essay, L. White (1969) focused on *Temperance* (fig. 8) in an illuminated manuscript of Jehan de Courteuise's treatise of Pseudo-Seneca from around 1470.¹⁴ The text clearly describes the meaning of the attributes of Temperance. "He who is mindful of the clock/ Is punctual in all his acts./ He who bridles his tongue/ Says naught that touches scandal./ He who puts glasses to his eyes/ Sees better what's around him./ Spurs show that fear Make (sic) the young man mature./ The mill which sustains our bodies/ Never is immoderate."¹⁵

An illuminated French manuscript from the latter half of the 15th century (fig. 9) presents another antecedent to Bruegel's *Temperance*. A nun-like woman, almost tall enough to reach the ceiling, carries a clock on her head, has a bit in her mouth, is holding reins and eyeglasses in her hands and is standing on the vane of a windmill. It is interesting to observe that this illustration also was under the iconographical tradition of the other manuscripts having the same attributes.

IV-2. Temperance on 15th and 16th Century Tombstones: clocks, bits and bridles

We can also see the influence of the 15th century French manuscript on tombstone depictions of Temperance. Personifications of the four cardinal virtues – Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude, and Justice – stand around the reclined king at the center of Michel Colombe's tomb of Francois II at the Nantes Cathedral. *Temperance* has a clock in her left hand, a bit and bridles in her right hand (1507, fig. 10). The sculpture of *Temperance* (1512–21, fig. 11) on the tomb of Cardinal Georges d'Amboise at Rouen Cathedral very closely resembles this. The tomb design is attributed to the architect of the Rouen Cathedral, Rouland Le Roux. Unlike the sculpture of *Temperance* at Nantes, this one is seated, but both hold the same box-



fig. 8
Temperance (detail of Pseudo-Seneca Moral Essays) c. 1470, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 9186 fol. 304r



fig. 9
Temperance, second half of the 15th century, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek



fig. 10 Michel Colombe, *Temperance* (detail of the tomb of Francois II), 1507, Nantes, Cathedral



fig. 11 *Temperance* (detail of the tomb of Cardinal Georges d'Amboise), 1512-21, Rouen, Cathedral



fig. 12 Jean de Broecq, *Temperance*, mid-16th century, Mons, Cathedral

shaped clock and reins, and also show similar poses in holding the hem of their long garments and wearing short kerchiefs

An illuminated manuscript of *The Adages* of Erasmus from around 1512-15 depicts the Virtues as controlling the various Vices. The female personification of Temperance holds reins, attached to a man with a bit forced in his mouth like a horse, and is positioned beneath a streamer reading 'Impetus animi' (impulses of the heart)

(fig. 13). With her other hand she is pouring water on a naked woman under a streamer reading "Iracundia" (impatience), seemingly because the woman is fanning flames (of passion) with a bellows. Erasmus said "Leave no traces of the pot in the ashes." This



fig. 13 Anonymous, *Temperance Controls Ferocity and Anger of Soul* (Erasmus, *Adages*), 1512-15, fol. 33r, Woodner collection

was in reaction to words of Plutarch interpreted to mean that no trace of past anger should remain, that when resentment has cooled down every recollection of past injuries should be obliterated.¹⁶

There is a sculpture of Temperance (fig. 12) by Jean de Broecq at the Mons Cathedral in Belgium. Her figure is a combination of Italian classical form and a Flemish visage. She holds a bit and long reins in her hands. In local light brown alabaster, rather than the white marble used by Colombe, the sculpture has a natural skin color.

IV-3. Temperance in 16th Century Flemish Tapestries - clocks, bits and bridles

Personifications of Temperance in 16th century Flemish tapestries regularly included the standard representations of the clock, the

eyeglasses, and the bit and reins. A series of tapestries called *Los Honores*, was produced in the workshop of Pieter van Aalst in Brussels on the occasion of Charles V's election as the Holy Emperor in 1519 and his coronation at Aachen in the following year. One of the tapestries is themed "The Victory of the Seven Virtues." A personification of the theological virtue Faith sits at the center, under a canopy and surrounded by standing Hope and Charity. Temperance (1520-25, fig. 14) is a level below on the left as one of the four Cardinal Virtues. She is seated with a box-shaped clock in her left hand and eyeglasses in her right hand.



fig. 14 Workshop of Pieter van Aalst, "Temperance" (detail of *The Victory of the Seven Virtues*), 1520-25, tapestry, Madrid, National Collection

The clock seems to be of the most advanced type of the time, with a built-in mechanism. The glasses are without earpiece bows, seemingly to be used hand-held. It is noteworthy that beneath the feet of the Seven Virtues are personifications of the corresponding vices. In the case of Hope, it is Judas who committed suicide in despair; for Temperance, the identity of the armed personification is unknown.¹⁷



fig. 15 Charles V and Pope Clement VII Entering Bologna in 1530, 1530, colored woodcut (published by Robert Peril)

IV-4. Temperance in 16th Century Netherlandish prints – clocks, bits and bridles

Temperance (fig. 15) appears in the monumental colored woodcut (7m long) published on the occasion of Charles V and Pope Clement VII Entering Bologna in 1530. Holding a clock, Temperance stands in an arcade niche of a triumphal arch. Her square clock, in comparison to the one in the tapestry noted above, is rather simple in appearance. There are also portrayals of Charity holding a child, Justice holding her scales, etc. The Cardinal Virtues are seemingly chosen to represent praise for the virtues of the Pope and the Emperor.

In Jan Swart's drawing from first half of the 16th Century (fig. 16), *Temperance* holds an hourglass and reins, but her dress, with its low-cut bodice, follows the fashion of the day. With the accent of strings on her shoulders and the ornamentation of the neckline, if she were not the personification of the virtue, this could be the portrait of a wealthy gentry lady. The significance of the men walking in the mountains in the background is unclear.

Like Broeck's work mentioned above, Heemskerck's *Temperance* (1556, fig. 17), the preparatory drawing for the print, has only the bit and bridle as attribute. The narrative background, with its great rock mountain, fort, and soldier on horseback, shows influence of Swart, but it is not clear if there is any specific relevance to Temperance of these additional elements.

Maerten de Vos (1531–1603), who was a close friend of Bruegel and traveled together with him to Italy for a certain period, produced *Temperance* (fig. 18) with a three-dimensional body modeling that was a result of his knowledge of anatomy. Up to this time, it was rare



fig. 16 Jan Swart, *Temperance*, first half of the 16th Century, drawing



fig. 17 Maerten van Heemskerck, *Temperance*, 1556, drawing



fig. 18 Maerten de Vos, *Temperance*, second half of the 16th century, drawing



fig. 19 Étienne Delaunne, *Temperance*, second half of the 16th century, engraving

for examples of Temperance to include a whip as her attribute, but since DISCIPLINA is inscribed at the bottom, and since discipline and order are the very behaviors that are basic to Temperance, it is highly probable that De Vos composed it for a preparatory drawing of the print *Temperance*.

IV-5. Bruegel's 'live snake' – a new attribute

Étienne Delaunne's oval print (fig. 19) is a rare example of *Temperance* associated with a live snake as her attribute. Delaunne was a graphic artist of the French Fontainebleau school, active in the same period as Bruegel. Delaunne invented a unique iconography of the "Seven Liberal Arts" in which each Art plays a musical instrument to allude to Music, signifying the educational cultivation of intellectuals. TEMPERANCIA is written at the lower part of Delaunne's composition. The half nude personification of *Temperance* is leaning on a large jar with an hourglass on top of it. She holds a bit and bridles in her left hand and a staff with a snake coiled around it in her right hand. It is of note that the staff is usually an attribute of Mercury, and the activities of the Seven Liberal Arts relate to this god of commerce. Thus, a snake as an attribute in Bruegel's *Temperance* is not unique. Delaunne's print is full of antique motifs such as vases, triumphal arches, round temples.

Why does Bruegel put a live snake as the belt of *Temperance*? In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ tells his 12 disciples to go out into the world as missionaries, saying "I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." (10:16) As will be discussed below, Bruegel's idea was probably that *Temperance* required Sapientia (wisdom) to control the Seven Liberal Arts.

It is interesting to find a live snake as a belt in German woodblock-cutter Wolfgang Resch's "A Wise Woman" entitled "Look at this Figure representing a wise woman" (1558, fig. 20). As an allegory of how a woman should be, she has a key in her ear and a lock on her mouth. The mirror in her hand projects an image of Christ's crucifixion, a symbol of a devout Christian. The explanation near the snake belt reads, "I belt my body with a snake. This protects an honest woman from the poison of shame, from wicked love, and from foolish monkey business." Thus, the chaste wife wraps a live snake around herself to avoid the stigma of shame, and to overcome temptation. Could it be possible that Bruegel, familiar with this German print, was inspired by it two years later in 1560 to include a live snake in his *Temperance*?

German artist Hans Sebald Beham's *Mercury* (c. 1530, fig. 21) was inspired by the Florentine woodcut by Baccio Baldini on the same subject dated around 1460. Beham portrays the qualities of a child born under the influence of the planet Mercury that reigns over the activities of the Seven Liberal Arts. The relation between Mercury and the Seven Liberal Arts is worth mentioning. Van Gelder and Borms on Bruegel's *Temperance* note: "The various groups of people around the main subject represent the Seven Liberal Arts. They act with Temperance and self-restraint under Mercury's astrological influence. Around the waist of Temperance is a special belt, a snake, illustrating a connection between Mercury's staff and learning and art. It means that the region of the Seven Liberal Arts belongs to Temperance as well as to Mercury."¹⁰



fig. 20
Wolfgang Resch, *A Wise Woman*, 1558, woodcut



fig. 21
Hans Sebald Beham, *Memory*, c. 1530, woodcut

V. Meaning of the Iconography of The Seven Liberal Arts in Bruegel's *Temperance*

In Bruegel's *Temperance*, we can see the various activities of each of the Seven Liberal Arts around the personification of *Temperance*. In addition, there are unprecedented activities in the iconography of *Temperance*, including sculpture and painting, and also the mechanical arts such as shooting at birds and surveying fields.

H. A. Klein (1963) points out "A very common interpretation of this picture is that Bruegel is taking a negative attitude toward all of the arts considered, not merely the dialectic group."¹⁹ In contrast, N.E. Serebrennikov (1995) interprets the meaning positively that *Temperance* is able to play her proper role through the practice of the Seven Liberal Arts, that the Seven Liberal Arts support *Temperance*.²⁰ Ilja M. Veldman (1985) interprets Bruegel's illustration as indicating that both intellectual and technical arts need 'matigheid' (temperance) and "zelfbeheersing" (self-restraint), and that practice is necessary in order to avoid 'zonder overdrijving' (excess).²¹ I agree with Veldman's interpretation, and unlike Klein and Serebrennikov, she moreover pays attention to the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, because Bruegel may have portrayed excess and deficiency among the Seven Liberal Arts in order to emphasize the importance of the Aristotelian mean.

Let me discuss how the Seven Liberal Arts have played role in the educational fields. In fact, from the Middle Ages through the 16th century, there are virtually no precedents for the concept of *Temperance* controlling the Seven Liberal Arts. As mentioned above, the Seven Liberal Arts were, from Hellenistic times, considered integral to the educational curriculum, and as a means for promoting human values. Medieval theologians saw the Seven Liberal Arts as essential to religious and philosophical studies and believed that through them one could understand the words of God and divine wisdom.²² In an illuminated manuscript of Herrad von Hohenburg *Hortus Deliciarum* (Garden of Delights), from the latter half of the 12th century, the personification of Philosophy is in a central circle, with Socrates and Plato seated below and personifications of the Seven Liberal Arts in the periphery (fig. 22).²³ The authority of the Seven Liberal Arts is thus approved schematically by the ancient philosophers.

In the 16th century, personifications of the Seven Liberal Arts were generally presented either all lined up in a row, or individually. In the print (fig.



fig. 22 *Seven Liberal Arts (Hortus Deliciarum)*, 1176-96



fig. 23 Virgil Solis, *Seven Liberal Arts*, first half of the 16th century, engraving

23) by German artist Virgil Solis, seven girls, each exhibiting the attributes of one of the Seven Liberal Arts, are drawn in lively poses as if dancing. From left to right, Gramatica (sic) holds a flag in her right hand and a writing tablet in her left hand; Dialectica wears the mask of a beast at the back of her head, meaning that the two interact Janus-like; Rhetorica carries a book, possibly the text of a drama; Arithmetica (sic) has a slate writing tablet and pen for doing calculations; Musica plays a horn in her left hand and a portable harp in her right hand; Geometria has paper and a pair of compasses; Astrologia has a celestial globe in her left hand and glances back, seemingly leading the group. Clearly the work is promoting the importance of the Seven Liberal Arts by their attributes.

It is notable that Frans Floris, the most commercially successful artist among Bruegel's contemporaries, painted four important sets of works on the Seven Liberal Arts in mid-16th century Netherlands. The young Floris, having studied in Italy for five years, was assigned by Hieronymus Cock to invent the individual personifications of the Arts. Due to his study of ancient sculpture in Rome, Floris was able to represent the human body in an anatomically accurate way. The first print series was completed in 1550-51. Cock himself seems to have added the landscape backgrounds. Floris' second series, *The Seven Liberal Arts* (1557) was completed for Nicolaes Jonghelinck's newly purchased villa (bought in 1554) at Ter Beek, in the outskirts of Antwerp.²⁶ This series was made following another series of his paintings, *The Labors of Hercules* (1555), at the same house. Jonghelinck was a wealthy merchant and art collector engaged in diamond trade, tax collection and insurance.²⁸ Carel van Mander, in his book *Schilder-Boeck* (Painter's Book) (1604), praised the artist: "All these works are very eminently painted, outstanding in their study of nudes, and subtle in their draperies and designs."²⁹ As Bruegel was a good friend of Jonghelinck and received a commission from him in the 1560s to execute ten paintings, he probably had a chance to see Floris' paintings including the *Seven Liberal Arts* series before composing his drawing *Temperance* in 1560. Simon Jansz. Kies, a disciple of Floris, copied after Floris' works, and Cornelis Cort transferred Kies' drawings to the engravings (c. 1565-1570), adjusting the horizontal orientation of the paintings to a vertical orientation for the engravings.²⁷ For this latter series, *Seven Liberal Arts* is inscribed in Latin. It is evident that this was a favored theme of the educated class. Floris defined his iconography through the combination of his knowledge of Italian Renaissance painting and his humanist education in the classics, Jonghelinck, who was also highly educated, may have had some influence on the configuration of the compositions. Floris' fourth *Liberal Arts* series was the fresco (c. 1565) reproducing sculptural effects of the painted bronze reliefs in the facade of his elaborately decorated atelier-house in Antwerp. Apparently Floris was aware of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling fresco. Floris' concept of praising the Liberal Arts was completely different from Bruegel's idea.

Let me now discuss how the iconography of Bruegel's "Seven Liberal Arts" differs from the iconography in works by Floris and others of Bruegel's contemporaries.

V-1. Grammatica (fig. 25)

A teacher sitting in the right foreground is instructing ten young pupils in the alphabet. He is dressed in a gown with a fur collar and, for beating the children, has a wooden spatula in his hand and a whip

made of branches at his waist. He looks stern and dim-witted, while in the original drawing (fig. 24) his expression is considerably softer. In either case, Bruegel would not have meant to delineate an enlightened instructor here. In comparison, the 16th century school scene from *Book of Hours of Marie Chanteault* (fig. 26) shows two much more dignified teachers. One is giving a young boy a beating while the other earnestly teaches the alphabet to another boy. In Bruegel's print, the pupils are mostly studying by themselves, and one boy is even teaching his classmate. At the lower left of the print, a boy sitting on a platform with BRUEGEL inscribed (signed on the drawing) is wearing a long sleeved garment. The garment is actually unsuitable for a schoolboy. It resembles though what Caspar, the most elderly of the three kings, wears in Bruegel's *Adoration of the Magi* (1564, London, National Gallery), a fashion that was common among the aristocrats in the 1520's and that appeared in the so-called 'Antwerp Mannerism' paintings. This boy in Bruegel's 'Grammatica' seems to be more able than the others and is engrossed in reading a scroll with a seal, probably a text in Latin that the teacher might be unable to read. The boy is without hair in the drawing while he is drawn with hair in the print. By height he is surely a child, so Bruegel was probably making a contrast between the exceptionally precocious child and the dull teacher in order to emphasize the teacher's 'lack' of knowledge and the child's 'excess' which would be an object of *Temperance*. The pupils' "excess" of ability recalls, as pointed out above, the importance of Aristotle's "doctrine of the mean."

In Floris' print *Grammatica* (fig. 27), engraved in 1565 after his painting, a woman instructor sits in a large rattan chair with a backrest and eagerly teaches reading to a young pupil. The other pupils are studying by themselves, or being taught by an older pupil. At the time, it was customary for children of various ages to study together, as in Bruegel's *Grammatica*. In Floris' painting, books by classical scholars of grammar – DIOMEDES, DONATVS, PRISCIANVS, PALEMON, SERVIVS – are strewn on the floor. The top line of the Latin inscription beneath the teacher's feet reads 'Grammar is the frail and stammering mouth of the child, it is the gateway to the other sciences.'²⁸ The bottom line reads "Dedicated



fig. 24 Bruegel, "Grammatica" (detail of fig. 1)



fig. 25 Bruegel, "Grammatica" (detail of fig. 2) cat. 54



fig. 26 A school scene (*Book of Hours of Marie Chanteault*), 16th century, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. Smith-Les-souëf 39



fig. 27 Frans Floris, "Grammatica", 1565, engraving



fig. 28 Hendrick Goltzius, *Grammatica*, end of 16th century, engraving

by Hieronymus Cock, in gratitude, to Nicolaes Jongelincx, greatest art lover of Antwerp." It follows that the intention of Floris' concept of "Seven Liberal Arts" is completely different from that of Bruegel's. The teacher of Bruegel's "Grammar" also differs from Hendrick Goltzius portrayal in *Gammatica* (fig. 28), where she instructs reading with a mother's affection. The furnishings in the room are quite grand, probably resembling a school for children of well-off parents. The Latin inscription at the bottom reads "A me principia, et magnarum exordia rerum/ Sumuntur, doctas hinc fit progressus ad artes." (From me, the principles and the beginnings of great things are undertaken, from here (they) will advance to learned arts.)

V-2. Arithmetica (fig. 29)

The central figure in the left foreground wearing a stylish hat and seeming to be a merchant or moneychanger is eagerly comparing a ledger book against cash. Moneychanging was one of the professions most in demand during the golden age of 16th century Antwerp, due to the city's international economy. We can infer from Marinus van Reymerswaele's *The Moneychanger* (fig. 30) that the profession was also often an object of satire on the pursuit of profit. The assistant at the moneychanger's left seems to be weak at calculation and is carving unit marks on a bellows. According to Borms and van Gelder, the half-barrel type of chair the assistant is sitting in is a practical affair, used in unheated rooms for protection from the cold.²⁹ A second assistant is using a quill pen to record what the moneychanger is counting. It seems that he has had better training than the other assistant.

In the background behind "Arithmetica," we see a painter working on a canvas. This is probably Bruegel's self-reference. In his lifetime as an artist, Bruegel did not execute portraits. Bruegel was probably disinterested in portraits rather than lacking in experience as portrait painter. We can see in *Peasant Wedding* (c. 1568) that Bruegel masterfully delineated characteristic peasant features.



fig. 29 Bruegel, "Arithmetica" (detail of fig. 2) cat. 54



fig. 30 Marinus van Reymerswaele, *The Moneychanger and his Wife*, 1539, oil, Madrid, Museo del Prado

V-3. Dialectica (fig. 31)

Five men of various ages are in heated discussion at the center right of Bruegel's *Temperance*. According to Romdahl (1947), the men represent several religious sects, the three scholar-like younger ones being Protestant denominations, the oldest one with a beard, a Jewish rabbi, and the two others Catholic priests.³⁰ This interpretation is persuasive, and indeed Bruegel drew a rabbi with the same kind of hat in his *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* (1565). The man's strict stance recalls the saying of Erasmus "An old man can be outrun, but not out-counseled." In any case, whether young or old, the men stand at the back of a building that seems to be a house of worship. The books on top and to the side of a pulpit-like lectern seem to be the Holy Scripture. The books, however, remain unopened, and no one seems to be paying attention to them. Bruegel probably had in mind the words from First Corinthians (3:20), "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." Bruegel's intention might be to ridicule men of all ages who debate with vigor but fail to give attention to the Holy Scripture or the word of God.

In *Dialectica* by Frans Floris (fig. 32), the young female personification of the Art sits in a chair with the falcon attribute (symbolizing ability to solve problems swiftly) on her head. She points her finger and argues with an old man. The Latin at the bottom reads: "Dialectica



fig. 31 Bruegel, "Dialectica" (detail of fig. 2) cat. 54



fig. 32 Frans Floris, *Dialectica*, 1565, engraving

teaches how to use reason. The great Plato therefore calls upon Dialectica as the highest of all the Arts." At her feet are books by the classical philosophers GORGAS, LVCIANVS, ZENON, ARISTOTELES, LIBANIVS. The dialogue between young and old is a point in common with Bruegel's work, but the atmosphere is completely different. In Floris' work, the personification of the *Dialectica* looks to the old man with respect and he replies majestically. Similarly, Dialectica (fig. 33) by Crispijn de Passe I shows the personification with a falcon on her head and using both her hands in argument, but from the balcony of a public building, debating with an audience in the background.



fig. 33 Crispijn de Passe I, *Dialectica*, second half of the 16th century, engraving

V-4. Geometrica (fig. 34)

Geometrica is portrayed in the right middle ground of the composition with "architecture" and "surveying." One man has climbed to the top of a round column and is setting a plumb bob; another is sitting on a board attached to the column and is using a compass to fix the position, possibly, of new ornamentation at even intervals. A third man on the side of the column uses a wheel and axel as a protractor to measure the angle of those positionings. Just below the column, an assistant is noting the measurements. In this manner, there are four persons working in the group. Between the capital and base of the column are decorations shaped something like wine glasses with knobs. I have seen a pattern similar to this on the Bramante's Corinthian columns at the Parish House of the Sant'Ambrogio Cloister in Milan (fig. 35), but the projections on those columns are uniform from top to bottom. According to Prof. Hiroyuki Suzuki, historian of architecture, Bramante wanted to express the columns as tree trunks.³⁰ While Bruegel may have found this kind of design inspiring, he is probably emphasizing more the point of over-decoration. The measuring of thin relief on stone may represent "Geometrica," or perhaps sculpture, in the same way that painting is represented behind "Arithmetica." The farmer surveying his field is also acting with the knowledge of Geometrica. In the immediate vicinity, the "technique" of shooting at a bird (a parrot) on top of a pole with a rifle and crossbow is shown. We can also see a cannon and cannon balls, probably a reference to ballistics that is also grouped under "Geometrica." With weaponry as a part of "Geometrica," the message is that Temperance is needed to protect from unnecessary risks.

As Geometrica includes architecture, a building boom under the Golden Age of Antwerp should be considered in relation to *Temperance*. The building of hexagonal or octagonal watchtowers became a status symbol of wealthy families in that city. Few of these remain today, but Bruegel probably observed the excess construction



fig. 34 Bruegel, "Geometrica" (detail of fig. 2) cat. 54



fig. 35 Bramante, Corinthian column, after 1492, The Priest Parish House of the Sant'Ambrogio Cloister, Milan

as a subject related to the need for *Temperance*. Coornhert, in his *Ethics, That is Art of Living Well* (1586) was also critical: "Costly and elaborate decoration of residences is unnecessary in the extreme."³²

In the print of Floris' *Geometrica* (fig. 36), the personification gives reference to Cybele or Mother Earth, with a crown in the shape of a fortress on her head. She is with two young men and measuring a globe of the earth with a compass. The Latin inscription defines the importance of the Art, "It is the territory of Geometrica to examine the space of places, and the length, breadth and depth of the things."



fig. 36 Frans Floris, *Geometria*, 1565, engraving

V-5. Musica (fig. 37)

In the mid-ground of Bruegel's composition, a musical performance by choirboys and monks is taking place. The exotic over-decorated canopy above them does not seem to be appropriate for a spiritual setting. Further, the score on the music stand has the five line staff of secular music rather than four line staff of Gregorian Chant. There are various unused musical instruments, a bass violin over head of the choirboys, a gothic harp, a lute, viola da braccio and other instruments, strewn on the ground. Besides string and wind instruments that accompany the choir, there are an organ, lute, bombard, cornet, bagpipe, and others.

According to Karel Moens³³, these musical instruments can be classified into five categories, or levels. The first is the organ, the most noble of all, acknowledged for church music. Nuremberg painter Georg Pencz' *Musica* (fig. 38), shows a young female personification of Music playing the organ, assisted by a putti working a bellows to deliver wind. The second level is represented by wind instruments such as the cornet and trombone that were also acceptable for playing in church. The third group, including the shawm, bass violin that were regularly played by members of the music guilds, was not suitable for use in church. The fourth ranking instruments included the lute, shown in the Bruegel print as being played in hiding by a person inside the canopy curtain. The fifth group is comprised of the neglected old-fashioned instruments, such as the large violin, or a small harp lying on the floor. At that time, guild members would not touch these, as they were considered to be beggars' instruments.

The personification of *Temperance* in Maerten de Vos' drawing (fig. 39), inscribed with the word "Moderatio," holds a bit and bridles in her left hand and a violin in her right hand. Moens (1994) interprets the violin as an attribute of "intemperance."³⁴ In other words, the personification holds her attribute in one hand and what

needs to be controlled, symbolized by the violin, in the other.

In Bruegel's lifetime, during the Reformation, various instruments were criticized as not worthy for playing in church. Erasmus criticized the excesses of music in the church: "We have introduced an artificial and theatrical music into the church, a bawling and an agitation of various voices, such as I believe had never been heard in the theaters of the Greeks and Romans. Amorous and lascivious melodies are heard such as elsewhere accompany only the dances of courtesans and clowns."³⁵ The Calvinist clergy in the mid-16th century made restrictions on hymns for the Psalms, and Catholics also restricted musical instruments.

Looking at Floris' *Musica* (fig. 40), the main figure is wearing a laurel crown and playing a virginal. A young man beside her and an old man in front of her accompany with lutes. Two boys in the center are singing, and a person who looks like an instructor is supervising their song. As in Bruegel's work, several instruments are strewn about the floor. They include a hurdy-gurdy (at that time, it was considered as a beggar's instrument in the Netherlands), an old fashioned guitar, flute and others. The Latin inscription reads, "Music with a trained ear, captures mutual harmony and the pleasing distinctions between sounds."³⁶ In other words, this is a tribute to the beauty of music that results from the combination of the tones of different instruments. In Maerten Vos' *Musica*, the personification is playing the lute, and the Latin inscription places value on the spiritual power of music: "Music is a variety of sounds that soothe the spirit. Those are the human voice, the reed instruments, flutes, shawm, and string instruments."³⁷ (See the section on "Temperance" in Karel Moens' essay in this catalogue.)

V-6. Astronomia (fig. 41)

Astronomy is displayed in the far center of the composition. One astronomer standing on the globe is measuring the position of the stars and the phase of the moon in the night sky. Another, positioning himself in front of the globe is recording the size of the earth and



fig. 37
Bruegel, "Musica"
(detail of fig. 2) cat.
54



fig. 38
Georg Pencz, *Musica*, first half of the 16th
Century, woodcut



fig. 39 Maerten de Vos, *Temperance*,
second half of the 16th century,
drawing



fig. 40 Frans Floris, *Musica*, 1565, engraving

studying the clouds and weather. They use what seem to be very large compasses but these were actually common at the time. Sebastian Brant had earlier severely criticized the astrology obsessed in chapter 65, "Of Attention to the Stars," in his 1494 *Ship of Fools*, "What stars and what the firmament/ And what the planets' course proclaims/ And God's wise providential aims./ They wish to know and would discuss/ Th' Almighty's plans for all of us."³⁸

Veldman, in her study (1985), pointed out the relationship between Heemskerck's *Allegory of the folly of too much worldly knowledge* (1550's, fig. 42) and Bruegel's *Astronomia*.³⁹ In Heemskerck's painting, the two young men measuring the earth, one with a large compass and the other with an oversize T-square, are both wearing jester's hats. Veldman, filling in the missing word, interprets the inscriptions in the seven cartouches, "Is he not a fool who wants to measure the world" (Is niet een sot die de werelt wil meten). Further Veldman draws attention to chapter 11 of the translation at the end of the 15th century into Dutch of Dutch theologian Lothar van Segni's c. 1200 Latin manuscript, *Liber de contemptu mundi sive de miseria conditionis humanae*, (the *Book on the Contempt of the Earth, and the Miserable Human Condition*), pointing out that scholars study ("measure") the height of the heavens, the width of the earth, the depth of the sea, and they attempt to uncover the mysteries of God; they erroneously believe they have tremendous deep knowledge, but the truly wise men recognize this is folly since the role of knowledge is to know that there are things humans cannot know.⁴⁰

In comparison, we can see how positive the view is in Floris' *Astronomia*. The winged personification uses a compass to study the constellations on a globe of the heavens, and an old man gazes together with her. The Latin inscription reads "By observing the diverse orbits back and forth of the stars of Urania with her eyes, she sees the future with her mind."⁴¹ Books written by astronomers, ANAXIMENES, HYGIVS, MANLIVS, PONTANVS, PTOLEMAVS, are stacked on the floor.



fig. 41
Bruegel, "Astronomia"
(detail of fig. 2) cat. 54



fig. 42
Maerten van Heemskerck, *Allegory of the Folly*, 1550's, oil, London, Private collection

V-7. Rhetorica (fig. 43)

The practice of Rhetorica is shown as an open-air performance at the top of the composition. The two actors are talking with each other on a makeshift mobile stage of barrels and supports. One plays a noble young man with a sword and the other one is a young lady (actually a man dressed as a woman) wearing a fashionable hat and garment with wide fur-trimmed cuffs. Below the stage is a rapt audience. In fact, this kind of mobile stage is depicted in Bruegel's *The Kermis at Hoboken* (1559, cat. 109) and a bit later in *Kermis of St George's* (fig. 44, cat. 110), completed almost at the same time as the "Seven Virtues" series. The stages shown in these works are similar to Rhetorica's stage in *Temperance*. De Tolnay (1935) suggests that the performance of the two actors signifies either an upside-down world or the folly of the world.⁴² Without doubt, the clown at the edge of the stage mocks the actors with a jester's scepter and the flag above shows an upside-down globe that could represent an "topsy-turvy world." The upside-down globe in the flag's design is similar to the inverted globe above the pub at the foreground of Bruegel's *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559). Van Gelder and Borms (1939) suggest that the play being performed probably came from *tafelspel*, that is, a cheerful small theater play performed at the end of a feast dinner at the Antwerp rhetorician chambers,⁴³ but they give no reference to what its title might have been.

Following the 1940 study by D. Th. Enklaar, Bruegel's Rhetorica has come to be regarded as representing the theater activities of the rhetorician chambers, the Dutch rhetoric societies that were popular in mid-16th century Netherlands, and their "Landjuweel" national drama competitions.⁴⁴ The competitions took place around once in three years and, although they were mostly amateur affairs, were suspended after 1541 at Diest, due to social unrest. Professional writers or poets counted among the members, but most were citizens who enjoyed to compose dramas or to perform the theater. Twenty years later, in 1561, when the competition was again initiated, it was organized in Antwerp by "Stock Flower," the most recent winner and thus responsible for the next performance.

The night watchman above the back curtain in Bruegel's "Rhetorica" holds a horn and signals "It is almost dawn, time to leave," while a jester mocks the painful farewell of the lovers with his scepter. If signs on the chests of the two actors are read as "Hope" and "Ghelooft" (Faith), although it is difficult to confirm, the third virtue, "Charity," would be missing, metaphorically indicating a lack in their "true love," and that is what Temperance would warn the lovers. The inscription on a stage banner reads "Ghij spreek" (Thou speak) and, although fluent speech is the goal of rhetoric, the lovers only speak superficially of the "Hope" to meet again and of the "Faith" to keep each other, while "true love" eludes them and it seems that the story told on this stage is one of a perverse, or topsy-turvy world.

In 1561, one year after *Temperance* had been completed, "Stock Flower" proposed 24 themes for the Landjuweel competition, among which three themes were selected by Governor General of the Netherlands Duchess Margareta.⁴⁵ "Stock Flower" chose for their play the following theme, "what most evokes men to bring attention to the Seven Liberal Arts." The play presented allegorical figures of poverty and labor to show that study of the Seven Liberal Arts is important in order to develop the five senses, that the Arts and Sciences all emanate from God and are more valuable than gold or

silver. As mentioned above, promotion of the Seven Liberal Arts was a matter of course for the mid-16th century humanists of the Netherlands. This also explains Floris' decorations for Jonghelinck's villa and for the facades of his own house.

In Floris' painting *Rhetoric* (fig. 45), the personification is teaching the art of public speaking and holds Mercury's Caduceus staff, with its two entwined snakes. An elderly man gives gentle encouragement by placing his hands on the young student's shoulders. Someone on a



fig. 43 Bruegel, "Rhetorica" (detail of fig. 2) cat. 54



fig. 44 Bruegel, "Open-air stage" (detail of *The Kermis of Saint George*) cat. 110



fig. 45 Floris, *Rhetorica*, 1557, oil, Italy, Private collection

makeshift stage in front of the big building in the background speaks to the public. Another person on the stage has a spear, but the relation between the two is unclear. The Latin inscription reads, "Artfully she adds the pleasing tones of eloquence to the spoken word, that it may flow more sweetly to the ears."⁴⁶ Books by esteemed orators CICERO, AESCHINES, ISOCRATES, and QUINTILIANVS are scattered on the ground. In contrast to Floris' rendition, it is clear that Bruegel intends to parody and to debate Floris' conventional praise of the Arts.

VI. Other Representations of the Seven Liberal Arts : Lucas d'Heere, François Briot, Wolf Drechsel, and others

Let's look at examples with meanings or functions related to the Seven Liberal Arts different from the works mentioned above. *The Liberal Arts in Time of War* (fig. 46) by Lucas d'Heere, a disciple of Floris, illustrates the Seven Liberal Arts, usually active during peacetime, sleeping during time of war. The Olympian gods, however, having decided the outcome of the war, send Mercury to awaken them. Rhetoric, holding a scroll, wakes up immediately but the others remain in deep sleep. The following is written on Vasari's so-called "100 Days Fresco" at the Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome: "During Peace the Seven Liberal Arts are nurtured; their minds are unified and public and private wealth is increasing."⁴⁷ Thus, we can surmise that peace and the Seven Liberal Arts were considered as closely associated.

As far as the present author is aware, the combination of the Seven Liberal Arts and Temperance with such specific meaning had not been conceived prior to Bruegel or after, except for a decorated tin plate by François Briot (fig. 47, c. 1585-90) titled *Temperance*, produced almost twenty-five years later than Bruegel's print. A naked personification is seated in the center ring of the round engraved plate. She has a cup in her right hand and a jug in her left hand. The letters "Temperantia" are arrayed around her head, and the artist's initials, F.B., are at her feet. In the next ring there are four oval cartouches with personifications of the four elements and the Latin inscriptions IGNIS (fire), AER (air), AQVA (water), TERRA (earth). In the outermost ring, personifications of the Seven Liberal Arts sit with their patron Minerva. DIALECTICA sits in front of a book and holds an unidentified object in her right hand; GRAMATICA (sic) leans on a slate board with the alphabet written on it; RHETORICA sits in front of an open book and puts her left hand on her chest while holding a flaming heart with her right hand; MUSICA holds a lute and is reading a score; ARITHMETICA holds a clock in her right hand and leans on a slate board with numbers written on it. An hourglass and a sundial with a compass are on the ground; GEOMETRIA holds a compass and a carpenter's T-square; ASTROLOGIA observes the heavens according to a plan in her right hand. An astrolabe and an hourglass are beside her. Between the cartouches are typical Mannerist style motifs, such as masks, grotesque ornaments, cornucopias and spirals, and herms. In another example, the Seven Liberal Arts are portrayed in the area on the periphery of the two central figures of Briot's "Adam and Eve." Clearly, the relation between the central figures and the Liberal Arts in the peripheral images in such decorated plates have no iconographical meaning and little to do with Bruegel's *Temperance*.

Wolf Drechsel's *The Grief of the Seven Liberal Arts* (1581, fig. 48) is



fig. 46 Lucas d'Heere, *The Liberal Arts in Time of War*, second half of the 16th century, oil, Torino, Galleria Sabauda



fig. 47 François Briot, *Temperance*, c. 1585-90, tin, Brussels, Musée Royal d'Art et d'Histoire



fig. 48 Wolf Drechsel, *The Grief of the Seven Liberal Arts*, 1581, engraving

another example of the Seven Liberal Arts in addition to Bruegel's *Temperance* and the work by Frans Floris discussed above. Here, the seven Gods – Jupiter holding lightning, Mars a spear, Mercury a caduceus, and Apollo with a musical instrument, etc. – sit above the clouds, but the Seven Liberal Arts on the ground look hopelessly to the sky. Drechsel did not grant peace to the personifications of the Seven Liberal Arts.

In the 17th century, J.A. Comenius, with his book *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* (1631), harshly criticized the Seven Liberal Arts as superficial and futile activities of elites. The narrator of Comenius' book is "a young pilgrim" (Comenius himself) in a land full of worldly contradictions "seeking the meaning of life."⁴⁸ In chapter 11, the pilgrim witnesses various people engaged in activities of the Seven Liberal Arts – poets, natural scientists, historians and others. But he has to lament over their meaningless activities. Among the Grammarians in the auditorium, he sees young and old absorbed in nonsense discussion like children playing games. "Whenever one wrote or said anything different from another, they either laughed at him or quarreled with him. Moreover, they hung words on the walls and disputed as to what belonged to which."⁴⁹ Among the Rhetoricians, many hold brushes and discuss "how words, either written or released from the mouth into the air, could be colored green, red, black, white, or whatever shade one desired."⁵⁰ Comenius recognizes "there is as much falsehood and vanity here as truth and benefit."⁵¹ Among the Arithmeticians, the calculations are useless tasks such as "counting the grains of sand of the sea" or "counting the dust flying in the sunlight."⁵² The Geometricians silently draw lines, angles, crosses, circles, squares, and points. The pilgrim sees the floor, the walls and the ceiling full of lines. The debates, proofs and refutations on theories are endless. Among the Musicians, singing, clanging and playing of various instruments is heard. They are very busy declaring their knowledge about the divine sounds and "they took apart, put together, and transpose the sounds."⁵³ But it is a waste of time because not one person in a thousand can achieve it. The Astronomers also can achieve nothing, even if they climb ladders with strings, rulers, weights, and compasses, to measure, regulate and hypothesize the path of stars. Thus, the pilgrim recognizes that there is nothing to learn from the Liberal Arts and their related fields of study. In the end, he realizes that prosperity on earth is vanity and "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."⁵⁴

Conclusion

One of key discussion points of this study is how the activities of the Liberal Arts in Bruegel's *Temperance* reflect the economic and cultural background of the mid-16th century Golden Age of Antwerp, according to Bruegel's observation of society and the intellectual class. To sum up, Arithmetica has to do with the money-changers who appeared along with international commerce in Antwerp; Geometria reflects the rush of the wealthy to build watch-towers; Musica reflects a period when the Reformation movement permeated the Netherlands and the Catholic church refrained from the use of brash musical instruments; and Rhetorica echoes the appearance of the Rederijkerskamer, the rhetoric chambers of the time. Under such circumstances, Bruegel's iconographical association between Temperance and the excessive or deficient activities of the

Seven Liberal Arts can be viewed as unprecedented at the time, and he might oppose the inclination of Floris and his contemporaries toward classical iconography.

Bruegel, however, does not totally negate the Seven Liberal Arts. He acknowledges the importance of each individual discipline. He raises anew awareness and self-recognition of the necessity of the golden mean by showing the dull teacher and the precocious pupils in "Grammatica," the merchant's greed in "Arithmetica," the excessive debate and deficient faith among Christians in "Dialectica," the folly of striving to know the mysteries of God in "Astronomica," etc. Erasmus and Bruegel share several common criticisms of man. However, Bruegel was not as harshly critical as Erasmus of human weakness. By coloring his sharp observations with pictorial humor by his genius hand, Bruegel reminded people looking at his images of how they unwittingly commit "upside-down" behavior in their everyday immoral acts. Thus, *Temperance* is one of Bruegel's most important messages to every viewer to let them discover their own behavior as reflected in the mirror of the Seven Liberal Arts. It was one of the good reasons why the print publisher Hieronymus Cock introduced Bruegel to the international market. The world of Bruegel prints continues to be beloved with high public evaluation until today.

*The author has previously published on this theme in the journal 'Bijzetsushi' number 82, 1970 ("On the Iconography of Pieter Bruegel's *Temperance* (Part 1), pp. 65–85), and number 83, 1971 ("On the Iconography of Pieter Bruegel's *Temperance* (Part 2), pp. 105–116). Further research was added for the presentation, "The Iconography of Pieter Bruegel's *Temperance*," for the Pieter Bruegel Conference on May 29, 2001 at the Rotterdam Boymans Beuningen Museum in conjunction with the exhibition held there from May 24 to August 5, 2001.

[Translated by Cheryl A. Silverman]

Notes:

- 1) The English translation is from: René van Bastelaer, *The Prints of Peter Bruegel the Elder*, new edition, ed. Susan Fargo Ghilchrist, San Francisco, 1992, p.186.
- 2) Lorens D'Orlean, *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. Nelson Francis, London 1942, p. 123. (the translation is with slightly updated phrasing by the present author.).
- 3) Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert, *Zedekunst dat is Wellevenskunste*, 1586, ed., B. Becker, Leiden 1942, pp. 390-396.
- 4) H. Arthur Klein, *Graphic Worlds of Peter Bruegel the Elder*, New York 1963, pp. 243-244.
- 5) J. G. van Gelder en Jan Borms, *Bruegel's zeven Deugden en zeven Hoofdzonden*, Amsterdam, 1939, pp. 36-37.
- 6) Klein, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
- 7) Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art*, New York 1964.
- 8) Colum Hourihane, *Virtue & Vice, The Personification in the Index of Christian Art*, Princeton 2000, pp. 293-297. Contains a list of works on Temperance.
- 9) Wolfgang Pleister und Wolfgang Schild hrg., *Recht und Gerechtigkeit im Spiegel der europäischen Kunst*, Köln 1988. (Includes various examples of clocks held by Temperance.).
- 10) Ilja M. Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism in the sixteenth century*, Maarsen 1977, p. 10.
- 11) Rosemond Tuve, "Notes on the Virtues and Vices," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Cl. vol. 26, 1963, p. 279.
- 12) Aristotle *The Nicomachean Ethics*, engl. trans. H. Rackham, London 1926, pp.93-101.
- 13) *Ibid.*, pp. 73-77.
- 14) Lynn White, Jr. "The Iconography of *Temperantia* and the Virtuousness of Technology", *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe* (Essays in memory of E. H. Harbison), Princeton 1969, pp. 214-215. The English translation is from

his article, p. 214. (White studies the iconography of clocks held by Temperance.)

- 15) The English translation is from White, *ibid.*, p. 214. This miniature is in the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 9186, fol. 304.
"Qui a lorloge soy regarde/ En tous ses faicts heure & te[m]ps g[a]rde. Qui porte le frain en sa bouche/ Chose ne dist qui a mal touche./ Qui lunettes met a ses yeux/ Pres lui regarde sen voit nœux./ Esperons monstrent que creneur/ Font estre le josne home meur./ Au moulin qui le corps soutient/ Nuls excès faire n'appartient."
- 16) Jean Michel Massing, *Erasmian Wit and Proverbial Wisdom: An Illustrated Moral Compendium for François I*, London 1995, pp. 94-95.
- 17) Guy Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry from the 15th to the 18th Century*, Tiel 1999, p. 152.
- 18) Van Gelder en Borms, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
- 19) Klein, *op. cit.*, p.244.
- 20) N. E. Serebrennikov, "Dwelck den Mensche, aldermeest tot Consten verweert. The Artist's Perspective", *Rhetoric-Rhétoriqueurs-Redenijders*, ed. Jelle Koopmans, Mark A. Meadow, Kees Meerhoff and Marijke Spies, Amsterdam 1995, pp. 219-246.
- 21) Ilja M. Veldman, *De maat van kennis en wetenschap*, Amsterdam 1985, p. 15.
- 22) David L. Wagner ed., *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, Bloomington 1983, p. 1.
- 23) Rosalie Green ed., *Hortus Deliciarum*, London 1979, pp. 104-106.
- 24) The seven paintings of Frans Floris' "Seven Liberal Arts" series were considered lost for many years. However in 1968, *Musica*, *Astronomy*, *Geometry*, *Rhetoric*, were found in the collection of Gerolamo Balbi, and in 1995, *Arithmetic* and *Grammar* were discovered in private European collections. The 7th work, *Dialectic* also appeared. I am grateful to Dr. Veronique Bücken, curator of the Belgian Royal Museum of Fine Arts, for this information.
- 25) Carl van de Velde, *Frans Floris (1519/20-1570), Leven en Werken*, II (*Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten, Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, 37) Brussel 1975, pp. 239-244.
- 26) Carel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*, Haarlem 1604, ed. and transl. H. Miedema, Doornspijk 1994, vol. 1, p. 226.
- 27) Manfred Sellink, *Cornelis Cort*, Rotterdam 1994, pp. 123-124.
- 28) The English translation of the Latin inscription on Floris' engraving is taken from Sellink, *ibid.*, p.131.
- 29) Van Gelder en Borms, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.
- 30) Alex L. Romdahl, *Pieter Bruegel den alder*, Stockholm 1947, p. 27.
- 31) The author long ago photographed the Bramante columns at the Parish House of Sant' Ambrogio Cloister in Milan. I am grateful to Hiroyuki Suzuki, professor of Tokyo University for identifying my photo with columns by Bramante, and to Eiko Wakayama, professor emerita of Osaka University for pointing out the work regarding the corridors of the same structure.
- 32) Coornhert, *op. cit.*, p. 184.
- 33) Karel Moens, *Muziek & Grafiek*, Antwerp 1994, p. 77. I am grateful to Dr. Karel Moens for valuable explanation on "Musica" in *Temperance* during my visit to his Vleeshuis Museum in 2000. I was able to summarize the five levels of the instruments in Musica in Bruegel's *Temperance* thanks to his suggestions and his book, *Muziek & Grafiek*, Antwerp 1994.
- 34) Moens, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- 35) Desiderius Erasmus, *Opera Omnia*, VI (1705), col. 731. The quote in English is found in H. Leitchentritt, "The Reform of Trent and its Effect on Music," *Musical Quarterly*, XXX, 1944, p. 319.
- 36) The English translation of the Latin inscription is taken from Sellink, *op.cit.*, p.133.
- 37) This description of "Musica" contains information that overlaps with the author's essay 'Bruegel's Ear – a picture that hears the past' in "Mozartiana" proceedings commemorating the 70th anniversary of Ebisawa Satoshi (in Japanese) Tokyo 2001, pp. 428-448.
- 38) Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, trans. Erwin H. Zeydel, New York 1944, p. 217.
- 39) Veldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.
- 40) Veldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9. Lothar van Segni, *Liber de contemptu mundi sive de miseria conditionis humanae*; Dutch translation by Andries van der Meulen, published in 1543 as *Een zuwerlic boucxkin vander ketyvigheyt der menschlicker naturen*.
- 41) The English translation of the Latin inscription is taken from Sellink, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

- 42) Charles de Tolnay, *Pierre Bruegel l'Ancien*, Brussels 1935, text, pp. 21-22.
- 43) Van Gelder en Borm, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- 44) D. Th. Enklaar, *Uit Uilenpijgels krings*, Assen 1940, p. 87ff. After his book, J. J. Mak argued him from the different points of view. J. J. Mak, "Wachter in het Rederijkersdrama," *Oud Holland*, 1949, vol. 64, pp. 162-172.
- 45) Serebrennikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236.
- 46) The English translation of the Latin inscription is taken from Sellink, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
- 47) About this palace, see Armando Schiavo, *Il Palazzo della Cancelleria*, Roma 1964.
- 48) John Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, transl. Howard Louthan and Andrea Sterk, New York 1997, p. 103. About Comenius' criticism on the Seven Liberal Arts I am indebted to Veldman's article (footnote 21 above, pp. 15-16.).
- 49) *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- 50) *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- 51) *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- 52) *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- 53) *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 54) *Ibid.*, p. 103.

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