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Embodied wits – The representation of deliberative thought in rhetoricians' drama

BART RAMAKERS

One of the reasons for the enduring popularity – all through the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth – of rhetoricians' theatre was the efficacy of the *spel van sinne* or *zinnespel*, the Netherlandish version of the morality play, as a means of knowledge acquisition and transmission.¹ The genre was considered the highest form of dramatic art and the most difficult to write. In his *Const van Rhetoriken* [*Art of Rhetoric*] from 1555, Matthijs de Castelein urged his readers not to venture into writing *zinnespelen* before all other genres had been sufficiently mastered.² Their popularity is attested by the large number of specimens – literally hundreds – that have survived, both in manuscript and print. Among the printed examples there are many which were performed during competitive festivals. Each participating chamber of rhetoric contributed a *zinnespel*, which was usually written by its most accomplished poet, the so-called *factor*. The festivals functioned as venues where topical issues were addressed, not so much with the intent to solve them as to provide an opportunity for reasoned discussion and to accommodate plural and divergent views. These views became apparent not only in the plays' arguments but also in the means by which such arguments were produced – that is, in the allegorical dramaturgy and the personifications that embodied it.

In the *zinnespel*, allegorical characters expressed the workings of the soul in its widest sense, that is, the functions of thinking, sensing, feeling, and willing, as well as the thoughts, feelings, and actions resulting from them. The genre came to reflect the inner process of deliberative thought within the protagonist, generally a character representing Everyman or Mankind. This mental process was influenced by external forces and institutions that were similarly personified. As a result, humanity's internal and external worlds were both embodied on stage.³

¹ On the use of personification in the arts generally, see Walter S. Melion and Bart Ramakers, 'Personification: An Introduction', in idem (eds.), *Personification: Embodying Meaning and Emotion* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1–40.

² Matthijs de Castelein, *De Const van Rhetoriken* (Ghent: Jan Cauweel, 1555), 52 (stanza 155).

³ Bart Ramakers, 'Walk, Talk, Sit, Quit?: On What Happens in Netherlandish Rhetoricians' Plays', in Phil Butterworth and Katie Normington (eds.), *Medieval Theatre Performance: Actors, Dancers, Automata and their Audiences* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), 35–51.

One way to study this kind of drama is to take its spatial language literally, to see the sense in which the stage was represented as a literal meeting place, a common place of argument,⁴ where a set of personified abstractions gathered together to body forth reasoned discourse. Playwrights represented the processes of rhetorical argument in concrete form, consciously applying the principles of argumentative and stylistic rhetoric, including personification, to exemplify such discourse. In so doing, they seem to have intuitively known what has only recently become part of neuropsychological theory, namely, that our thinking is always and fundamentally embodied. Thus, the study of dramatic personification may very well lead us to cognitive cultural studies, particularly to the study of performance and cognition.⁵ The presence of personifications in particular locations on stage did not just provide the audience with a model for understanding intellection, sensation, and volition – it exemplified the very essence and reality of these operations.

Given the number of extant plays, research into all personifications in rhetoricians' drama would require a book-length study. This article is meant as a first foray into the rhetoricians' taxonomy of the mind, and limits itself to personifications of thinking, sensing, feeling, and willing. It starts from the assumption that the inflections of the nouns, verbs, and adjectives which refer to these operations and which were used to name the characters that personify them, provide essential clues for our understanding of how the *zinnespel* represented deliberative thought. Of course, the names are not the only parameters of the personifications' significance.⁶ In order to come to a more comprehensive understanding of their interactions, the staging conditions and likely performance of a number of *zinnespelen* will be taken into account. Some were written by anonymous authors, some by well-known playwrights, whose handling of personification allegory bespeaks their keen ability to subtly express their ideas and opinions. Several plays were performed at theatrical contests, where, as previously mentioned, chambers of rhetoric met in an atmosphere of mutual intellectual and artistic endeavour. Given the stage's function during these festivals as a literal meeting place, a place of argument, it is essential whenever possible to analyse the personifications' attire and attributes as well as their physical position and movement, as these reflected the workings of the personified entities and their shifting relationships.

⁴ For a treatment of the typical rhetoricians' stage as a rhetorical *locus*, see M. A. Meadow, 'Aertsen's *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, Serlio's Architecture and the Meaning of Location', in Jelle Koopmans, Mark A. Meadow, Kees Meerhoff, and Marijke Spies (eds.), *Rhetoric – Rhétoriciens – Rederijers* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1995), 175–96.

⁵ See, for example, Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart (eds.), *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁶ For a list of all characters in alphabetical order, see the comprehensive repertory of rhetoricians' drama, which includes references to manuscripts and editions: W. M. H. Hummelen, *Repertorium van het rederijersdrama 1500–c. 1620* (Assen: Van Gorkum, 1968), 287–338.

MORAL PLAYS AND PRINTS

The wide range of personifications of mental organs and functions in the surviving plays indicates that the rhetoricians saw early modern man as a self-contained, autonomous being, intellectually fully able to address the issues facing him. In order to understand the wider cultural significance of the *zinnespel* and the mental processes it embodied, we can look instructively to the moral print, a sister genre of the moral play, to see how it too was rooted in an embodied model of contemporary ethical thinking. It does not seem too far-fetched to suppose that the extensive proliferation and diversification of personifications of mental factors and forces in both genres resulted from what might be called an ethical turn in sixteenth-century art and theatre.

Man is Pestered by Sins (Fig. 1) is the fourth of a series of six images called *The Misery of Human Life* (1563) by the Haarlem engraver Philips Galle. But its title does not completely match its content.⁷ Of the six characters



Fig. 1 Philips Galle, *Man is Pestered by Sins*, 1563, engraving, 18.8 x. 24.2 cm (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum).

⁷ *The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts 1450–1700: Philips Galle, Part II*, comp. Manfred Sellink and Marjolein Leesberg, ed. Manfred Sellink (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision Publishers, 2001), 233–41 (nos. 287–92), esp. 234, 239 (no. 290). In the print from the Rijksmuseum, the Latin subscription and its Dutch and French translations are missing. The text in English translation reads: ‘On top of all this our world is full of uncertainty: / The wealthy become poor, the just get imprisoned. / One chokes, one drowns, one breaks an arm, leg, or neck, / Yet every man aims to prolong his wretched life’.

surrounding Man [*Homo*], only four embody sins, vices, or passions: Avarice [*Avaritia*], Envy [*Invidia*], Sadness [*Tristitia*], and Pride [*Superbia*]. The remaining two figures represent faculties or dispositions involved in the reasoning process which determines Man's moral behaviour: Conscience [*Conscientia*] and Opinion [*Opinio*]. A closer analysis of the print's composition and iconography yields further insights. Man is positioned exactly in the middle, taking centre stage. He walks, his hands twisted in anguish, his gaze forward and slightly cast down as if in thought. The three characters to the left of him try to attract his attention, looking and gesturing at him and showing him their attributes. Avarice holds a so-called *stokbeurs* (several purses fastened to a wooden handle), Conscience holds a convex mirror in his left hand and a rod in his right, and Opinion points to her head. The three vices following Man can be easily identified, too. Envy, an emaciated old woman, eats her own heart. Sadness, her head bowed, twists her hands in anguish, like Man. Finally, Pride sticks out her chest, her nose in the air, her right hand confidently on her waist. She holds in her left hand a heart with peacock feathers, a sign of vanity. All of Man's company are female and dressed, except for Conscience, who is male and naked. He represents Man's alter ego, the reflection of his inner self in all its moral nudity, which he may literally observe in the mirror held before his eyes.

Obviously, Galle's print presents us with a representation of Man progressing on life's journey, his mind susceptible to sinful thoughts and sentiments which he should face with a clear conscience, unclouded by false opinions. Its featured characters and the discourse it constitutes, may well be compared to *Die Mensch wil die werlt bevechten* [Man Wants to Fight the World],⁸ a *zinnespel* by Louris Jansz, a contemporary of Galle's and a fellow inhabitant of Haarlem. He stands out as a typical representative of a class of humanistically oriented rhetoricians, who saw their vernacular plays as instruments to realise societal goals. Jansz combined a career as a cloth merchant with an almost lifelong attachment as trustee to a local orphanage for apprentice boys. He was the *factor* of the chamber of rhetoric *De Wijngaertrancken* [The Grapevines]. In his *zinnespelen* one notices a constant concern for peace, tolerance, and charity amidst the political, economic, and religious crises the city went through during the second half of the sixteenth century.

In many of Jansz' plays, Reason [*Reden*] takes pride of place among the benevolent powers that try to lead Man [*Mens*] from wrong to right. The opening scene of the play just mentioned, displays features of a farce and therefore has a comic effect. We see an angry Man with a half-drawn sword appear on stage. He tells his wife, Mild Anxiety [*Wat Achterdenken*] that he is going to fight the world. He believes that the world is a person, because the village priest

⁸ W. N. M. Hüskens, B. A. M. Ramakers, and F. A. M. Schaars (eds.), *Trou Moet Blijcken: Bronnenuitgave van de boeken der Haarlemse rederijkerskamer 'de Pellicanisten'*, 8 vols. (Assen/Slingenberg: Quarto, 1992-98), V, fols. 126r-39r.

described it as such in his Sunday sermon: as a murderer, thief, and tyrant. As the village's bailiff, he feels it is his responsibility to fight and kill this foe. His farm hand, called Blindness [*Verblindheid*], is summoned to fetch his suit of armour. All of its parts are allegorised: his chain mail is called Complacency [*Gemak*]; his cape Pride [*Hovaardij*]; his girdle Lust of the Flesh [*Wellust des Vlezes*]; and his stick Evil Intent [*Kwade Geneigdheid*]. Mild Anxiety, who realises that Man has misunderstood the sermon, warns him that he will have trouble finding the world, because it constantly changes shape – a hint, it seems, about the vicissitudes of fortune.

Nevertheless, Man sets out to seek his imagined opponent, but in an ensuing scene encounters Reason, who is seconded by Knowledge [*Kennisse*] and Justice [*Justitia*]. They all sit in chairs. That of Reason, though, is placed higher than the other two. Reason holds a rod, Knowledge a mirror, and Justice a sword. Through their attributes Knowledge and Justice may be identified as the cardinal virtues with that name (knowledge being synonymous with prudence or wisdom). Man is invited to sit in a chair called Conscience [*Consciencie*]. He should take the rod of Reason in one hand and the mirror of Knowledge in the other, and then look in the latter. Reason and Knowledge, their working exemplified by their attributes, help Man to examine his conscience. He is eventually convinced that the world, instead of a person, is a totality of forces, both external and internal, which he has to confront with the spiritual armour of Ephesians 6: 12–7. The armour he is wearing is reinterpreted in this sense. Thus, Jansz visualises the process of moral scrutiny in virtually the same manner as Galle.

Through the work of art historians such as Ilja Veldman we have become well aware of the role prints such as Galle's played in the propagation of moral virtue among the sixteenth-century urban populace of the Low Countries.⁹ She describes the circles in which they were bought and collected as 'the world of the rhetoricians and like-minded spirits – substantial middle-class citizens [...] who were accustomed to allegorical terminology and to appreciating a moral in allegorical garb'¹⁰ – a clear reference to the chambers of rhetoric and their favoured genre of the *zinnespel*. Veldman has especially made her mark through her work on Dirk Volckertsz Coornhert, who, apart from being a versatile playwright and author of treatises, was also a prolific engraver. He lived in Haarlem in the same period as Galle and Jansz. In fact, Galle was Coornhert's pupil, and Coornhert and Jansz were acquainted and had professional dealings with each other.¹¹

⁹ See, among her other publications, Ilja M. Veldman, *Images for the Eye and Soul: Functions and Meaning in Netherlandish Prints (1450–1650)* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2006).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 88–89.

¹¹ Anita Boele, *Leden van één lichaam: Denkbeelden over armen, armenzorg en liefdadigheid in de Noordelijke Nederlanden 1300–1650* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013), 205–8. See also Dorothee Sturkenboom, 'The "Simple Burgher" of D.V. Coornhert (1522–1590): A Dutch Freethinker Opens the Door to a New Age', in Margaret C. Jacob and Catherine Secretan (eds.), *In Praise of Ordinary People: Early Modern Britain and the Dutch Republic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 19–46.

The discursivity of moral prints such as Galle's and of moral plays such as Jansz's consisted not so much in the demonstration of behaviour to be imitated or avoided, but rather in the clarification of the states of mind and circumstances giving rise to such behaviour. They sought to familiarise their viewers and spectators with the internal (mental) and external (situational) factors and forces involved in moral decision-making, including this decision-making process itself, helping them to create an ingrained disposition or habitus for thinking and acting in a morally responsible way. The same is true for Coornhert's treatise *Ethics* (1586), which meant to provide its readers with an analytical apparatus, a mental toolkit so to speak, for virtuous living, indeed an art – *ars* – or learning guide of what he explicitly calls 'the art of living well', the acquisition of which required 'practice and experience'.¹² 'Correct knowledge', Coornhert insists, 'precedes all good deeds'.¹³ Moral prints and plays also provided such knowledge, visualising what moral wisdom contained and how it could be acquired and applied. Both the visual and the literary arts – the latter through rhetoric – played an essential role in furthering the art of living well.

All of the factors and forces personified in Galle's print and Jansz's play are dealt with by Coornhert, too. He calls conscience 'a mirror of our actions. If a person does well, it shows him as a good person; if he sins, then it shows him as a bad person in his own eyes'.¹⁴ Opinion has a negative connotation; it 'only produces uncertainty' and is alternatively dubbed 'false opinion'.¹⁵ Some forces are even described in a metaphorical, personifying manner, as in contemporary prints and plays: 'Reason directs our thought the way the lady of the house directs her servants who would otherwise wander around aimlessly'.¹⁶ Deliberation is her 'first objective [...] as it is applied'.¹⁷ Will 'summons her counsellors to the judges' chambers of understanding', those counsellors being 'reason, knowledge, free choice and judgment'.¹⁸ That we may take Knowledge in Jansz's play to personify wisdom or prudence follows from the line that '[w]isdom is an indubitable knowledge of which things are desirable and which are to be shunned'.¹⁹

Coornhert's treatise was the late sixteenth-century manifestation of a programme of ethical thinking which started off with Erasmus's *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* [Manual of a Christian Knight] of 1501. It too is concerned with the attainment of the knowledge or wisdom needed to develop a virtuous character. We come across the same insistence on the use of reason – practical reason,

¹² D. V. Coornhert, *Ethics, the Art of Living Well* [...], ed. and trans. Gerrit Voogt (Hilversum: Verloren, 2015), 63.13.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 199.35.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.14; 102.11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 224.6.

that is, which pertains to morals.²⁰ To become wise means to be able to scrutinise oneself: ‘know thyself’,²¹ Erasmus insists. Like Coornhert, he takes recourse to personification in order to envisage the mental procedures involved in ethical deliberation, employing well-known metaphors:²²

[T]he heart of man is not inaptly compared to a turbulent republic, which, since it is made up of different kinds of men, is subject to frequent upheavals and conflicts because of discordant interest, unless supreme power is vested in one man, who will ordain nothing that is not for the best welfare of the state.

That ‘man’, for that matter, is reason, who in this republic ‘plays the role of king’.²³ Erasmus’s and Coornhert’s moral educational programme, which was rooted in antiquity, more specifically in Aristotelian virtue ethics,²⁴ fitted well into the urban middle class’s intellectual ambitions. It should ultimately lead to *eudaimonia*, the state of human flourishing or happiness: ‘the only road to happiness is first to know yourself and then not to act in anything according to the passions but in all things according to the judgment of reason’.²⁵ This kind of moral education centred around paradigms or exemplars: characters from the Bible, ancient history, and mythology, but also allegorical figures, whose described or – in the case of plays and prints – embodied actions were appreciated as models for moral reasoning.

FROM SINGLE TRUTH TO PROTEAN KNOWLEDGE

It is against this roughly sketched background of moral philosophical engagement that the personifications of thinking, sensing, feeling, and willing in rhetoricians’ drama should be examined. Their manoeuvres and juxtapositions on stage, like those of the figures in Galle’s print, acted as pictorial representations of the process of moral argument as exemplified by Erasmus and Coornhert. This is not to say that all characters and plays discussed here relate to ethics. A *zinnespel* could address a plethora of questions – religious, theological, social, political, epistemological. However, most of these had moral dimensions, which is all the more apparent because the answers to them were to be reached by an individual, the Mankind character, whose deliberations not only had to

²⁰ Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 24, 32; Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle’s Theory of Virtue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004 [1989]), 2, 5, 10, 48.

²¹ *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol. 66: *Spiritualia: Enchiridion; De Contemptu Mundi; De Vidua Christiana*, ed. John E. O’Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 40.

²² *Ibid.*, 42.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ The literature on virtue ethics is vast. We limit ourselves to mentioning Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, and Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*.

²⁵ *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol. 66, 46.

lead to a particular insight, opinion, or idea, but in many cases also to action. Such deliberations were bound to have ethical overtones.

The onomastic procedure by which personifications were created was very intricate. Although single-word names consisting of one noun were often used, they were outnumbered by names consisting of two words. These were either adjective constructions, comprising one noun and a preceding adjective, or genitive constructions, in which a dependent noun in the genitive case preceded a head noun, or in which a dependent noun was linked to a head noun through the preposition *van* [of] or the genitive article *der* [of the]. Following this naming procedure, playwrights reached a high level of semantic precision, meticulously defining and refining the entities they sought to personify. The fact, for example, that a personification was not simply called Deceit [*Bedrog*] or Comprehension [*Begrijpen*] but Subtle Deceit [*Subtiel Bedrog*] or Subtle Comprehension [*Subtiel Begrijpen*], suggests that playwrights were aware of the intricacies of human behaviour and psychology, and felt an urge to express these.

The extensive proliferation and diversification of personifications in the *zinnespel* is already evident from the names used for the Mankind character, the mental agent, so to speak. In the early morality tradition, the human race tended to be represented by characters embodying its general aspect, such as Everyman [*Elckerlijc*]. Much more frequent, however, was Man [*Mens*]. Where the name Everyman suggested an approach of the individual from a collective perspective, Man did the opposite – implying an approach toward the collective from an individual perspective. This approach was further enhanced by placing an adjective in front of Man, thus specifying the kind of individual represented. As a result, personifications either referred to a particular aspect of man's spiritual or worldly existence common to all, such as Rational Man [*Redelijk Mens*], Inner Man [*Inwendige Mens*], and Man Dying [*Stervende Mens*], or to a particular type of man, as Worldly Man [*Aardse Mens*], Merciful Man [*Barmhartige Mens*], and Wavering Man [*Twijfelachtig Mens*].²⁶

The rhetoricians' inquisitive ambitions were expressed nowhere clearer than in characters whose names incorporate the verb *Weten* [To Know/Knowing]. Although man's intellectual curiosity could go too far, characters called *Weten* usually betray a real and positive thirst for knowledge, which they eagerly awaited to be satisfied. This is especially the case in plays written for competitive festivals, whose intention was to generate and spread learning. Characters in this category are Longing to Know [*Begeerte om Weten*], Endeavour to Know [*Bezoek om Weten*], and Wanting to Know the Best for Sure [*Wel 't Best Willen Weten*].

Such characters are indicative of the *zinnespel*'s changing epistemological aim. Over time the genre evolved from a manner of predominantly religious inquiry leading to salvific truth, to a method of exploration into various

²⁶ Another way to mark a subset of humanity was to add the quantifier *Menig* [Many], either in front of *Mens*, such as in Many a Man [*Menig Mens*], or in front of an adjective–noun construction, such as in Many a Simple Man [*Menig Eenvoudig Mens*].

intellectual fields, with the purpose of acquiring knowledge *per se*. Whereas the Everyman character initially stood for all of humanity, he gradually developed into the representative of a specific category of man or age group.²⁷ Not unsurprisingly, the rhetoricians began to shape him as one of their own, that is, as an epitome of bourgeois inquisitiveness. This development dovetailed with an evolution of the *zinnespel*'s discursive structure, from an authoritative demonstration following the format of the scholastic *disputatio* to an exploration along probabilistic lines, that is, an argumentation on two sides of the matter (*in utramque partem*).²⁸

This may be illustrated by the play performed by the chamber of rhetoric *De Bloeiende Wijngaard* [The Blossoming Vineyard] of Berchem at the Antwerp *Haagspel* of 1561, which was held directly after the famous *Landjuweel*.²⁹ Contributions to this festival had to answer the question 'What craft is most useful and honest, though held in low esteem?' The Berchem play was written by Peeter Heyns, who like Louris Jansz was a vernacular humanist with connections among the learned circles of his native Antwerp. The cartographer Abraham Ortelius was a close friend. Heyns ran a French school for girls and in 1579 was appointed dean of the local schoolmasters' guild. He fled the city after its fall in 1585 and later settled in Haarlem.

The prologue of the Berchem play features a Mankind character called Wanting to Know Much [*Gaarne Veel Weten*]. He is explicitly identified as 'A Rhetorician' [Eenen Rhetoricien] and poses as a prototypical festival-goer, a curious mind like his fellow participants. He climbs onto the stage together with his two interlocutors, Enduring Curiosity [*Oude Nieuwghiericheyt*] and Revealer of All [*Ontdecker van Als*]. The first is costumed half male, half female. His name and attire thus indicate that the spirit of enquiry is not only of all ages but also of both sexes. The second is explicitly called 'a printer' [Eenen Drucker]. He personifies the sheer limitless dissemination of knowledge through the printing press and demonstrates his intellectual prowess by summing up a plethora of arguments from classical sources available in print. All this in support of his contention that the most useful and honest craft is husbandry.

All three characters hope the ensuing play will reach the same conclusion. Indeed, it does just that. Its main character represents the generation from

²⁷ From the moment the *zinnespel* began to address social issues, the Mankind character and other personifications sometimes were presented as representatives of the civic community or of a particular class, as is evident from names like Commonality [Gemeen], Community [Gemeente], Common Man [Gemene Man], Citizen [Burger], and Craftsman [Ambachtsman].

²⁸ Marijke Spies, "'Op de questye...': Over de structuur van 16e-eeuwse zinnespelen", *De nieuwe taalgids*, 83 (1990), 139–50; Bart Ramakers, "Tonen en betogen: De dramaturgie van de Rotterdamse spelen van 1561", *Spiegel der Letteren*, 43 (2001) 3, 176–204.

²⁹ On these competitions, see *De Antwerpse spelen van 1561, naar de editie Silvius (Antwerpen 1562)*, ed. Ruud Ryckaert, 2 vols. (Ghent: Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde, 2011), I, 24–58; and Jeroen Vandommele, *Als in een spiegel: Vrede, kennis en gemeenschap op het Antwerpse Landjuweel van 1561* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011), 27–50. For an edition of the play from Berchem, see *De Antwerpse spelen van 1561*, I, 1287–343. For a topical analysis, see Vandommele, *Als in een spiegel*, 347–59.

which the chambers of rhetoric recruited many of their members and at which they aimed most of their teaching: Pious Youth [*Godvruchtighe Jongheyt*]. He is clad ‘decently’ [*tamelijck*] and willingly accepts the counsel of his father, Fear of the Lord [*Vreesse des Heeren*], who is dressed in Jewish attire, and his mother Knowledge of Truth [*Kennesse des Waerheyt*], who is clad in white to express her purity. The former represents the Old, the latter the New Testament. When he asks what he should choose for a craft, they advise Pious Youth to become a farmer and, at the end of the play, present him with two living images to illustrate their point: Adam in the Garden of Eden [Genesis 2: 15] and Christ as the Gardener [John 20: 15]. Earlier they provided him with two attributes symbolising demeanour that will protect him from temptation: the cape Simple Modesty [*Eenvoudighe Simpelheyt*] and the spade Well-Intended Labour [*Goetwillighen Arbeyt*].

Pious Youth surely needs these, since the path of truth is not a straight one. Along the way he has to fight off two so-called *sinnekens* – tempter characters operating in pairs – who personify forms of mental objections and distractions.³⁰ In this play their names are Lust for Riches [*Lust tot Rijckdom*] and Carnal Ease [*tsVleesch Ghemack*]. The first is male, the second female. *Sinnekens* were part and parcel of the *zinnespel*. They gave face and voice to the Mankind character’s sinful promptings and deluded him into doing or thinking what was morally wrong or intellectually false. Illustrative of their actions in this play is that they explicitly intend to confuse Pious Youth by presenting him with a long list of alternative professions and of corresponding arguments for choosing them. Thus, deliberative thought was represented as being difficult not only in terms of having to distinguish between right and wrong, but also in terms of having to deal with a sheer limitless number of intellectual options. The play’s dramaturgy made equally clear that an adolescent’s intellectual efforts would only bear fruit if he could suppress his sinful inclinations by modesty and diligence.

INNER DELIBERATION, OUTER EXPRESSION

The *zinnespel*’s audience must have been aware – consciously or unconsciously – of the fact that what it saw and heard was partly the externalisation of a process of reasoning and experiencing that took place inside man. How dominant this interior world was, is evident from personifications of the functions that regulated man’s internal and external life. In the remaining sections, we shall first discuss the representation of thinking *per se*, then address the feelings and impulses that such thinking had to deal with, among them vices and virtues; and finally discuss the role of willpower and the set of physiological capacities that generated feelings in the first place and formed both a source and an instrument of thinking: the senses.

³⁰ On this character type, see Charlotte Steenbrugge, *Staging Vice: A Study of Dramatic Traditions in Medieval and Sixteenth-Century England and the Low Countries* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014).

In early modern Dutch two nouns could refer to the mind, that is, the seat of, or the instrument with which man exercised, intelligence: *Geest* and *Verstand*.³¹ The products of man's mental operations were personified by characters summarised by the noun *Gedachte(n)* [Thought(s)]. As we have already seen, *Opinien* [Opinions] were to be mistrusted. Personifications like *Diverse Opinien* [*Diverse Opinien*] represented unstable thoughts. Characters who personified these and other products of the mind put them forward in the form of good (or bad) advice. Admonition was itself personified by characters named Proposal [*Voortstel*], Counsel [*Raad*], Teaching [*Lering*], or Prompting [*Ingeven*].

A number of the aforementioned mental operations and products were personified in an anonymous play performed by the chamber of rhetoric *De Roo Rosen* [The Red Roses] from Schiedam, at the Rotterdam festival of 1561.³² Its protagonist, Many a Man [*Menig Mens*], sets out to answer the contest's central question, namely, 'who, seemingly abandoned by God, were comforted most by Him?' Again, two *sinnekens* appear. This time their names are Misbelief [*Wangeloof*] and Doubt [*Twijfel*]. They lead Many a Man to a tavern, called Darkened Mind [*Duister Verstand*], which is run by the landlord, *Diverse Opinien* [*Diverse Opinien*]; his wife, Idle Senses [*Ijdel van Zinnen*]; and their daughter, Strange Fantasies [*Vreemde Fantasiën*]. They serve him food called Human Teaching [*'s Menschen Leren*] and wine called Satisfaction of One's Senses [*Eigen Zins Gebruiken*]. Obviously, their intention is to distract Many a Man from his mission. However, Gnawing Conscience [*Knagende Conscientie*] makes him see real sense, after which he meets a benevolent adviser, Spiritual Influence [*Geestelijke Influentie*], who introduces him to a series of biblical figures – again presented in the form of living images – who embody the sought-after answer. Despite its straightforward and conventional dramaturgy, the play demonstrates keen insight into human psychology in general, and the pitfalls of human deliberation in particular. Serious thinking was easily hampered by the constant distraction of the senses (to which we shall return below). At the same time, the play exerts confidence in man's ability to overcome mental obstacles by following the call of conscience and finding inspiration from reading the Bible.

Encouragement to think independently was pre-eminently provided by the extremely popular characters Reason [*Reden*] and Reasonableness [*Redelijkheid*]. It was the capacity to produce true and justified knowledge and insight, especially for practical purposes, that is, for the sake of action and/or of achieving

³¹ In some names, though, *Verstand*, as in phrases with *Begrip/Begrijpen* [Comprehension], referred to grasping or understanding. The word *Hoofd* [Head] also was used, as the bodily location of the mind. It could be filled with all sorts of things and stood for human beings with particular dispositions, such as Head Full of Devotion [*Hoofd vol Devotie*], Head Full of Worries [*Hoofd vol Zorgen*], and Head Full of Pleasures [*Hoofd vol Geneugten*].

³² *Spelen van Sinne vol schoone allegatien* [...], ed. Henk J. Hollaar (Delft: Eburon, 2006), 246–77; idem, *De Rotterdamse spelen van 1561: Een Hollandse toneelcompetitie met politieke lading* (Delft: Eburon, 2006), 113–22.

some end.³³ Practical reason under the influence of humanism was increasingly exerted as a means of self-fashioning in various domains.³⁴ The importance of reason is further suggested by personifications whose names have the adjective *Redelijk* [Reasonable] in them, like Reasonable Mind [*Redelijk Verstand*] and Reasonable Feeling [*Redelijk Gevoel(en)*]. They indicate moderate, non-extreme, and non-emotional ways of thinking and judging. Being uniquely human, universal, and powerful, personifications of reason emerged as the Mankind character's most important counsellor. Many rhetoricians considered the faculty to be the role and measure of human conduct, based on an individual balancing process as advocated by Erasmus and Coornhert and visualised by Galle and Jansz.

They began to particularly champion reason as man's prime intellectual tool of inquiry into matters of theological doctrine and religious controversy. We can gauge this by two *zinnespelen* that were performed at the Ghent contest of 1539. All contributions to this festival appeared in a printed edition – the first of its kind.³⁵ The pre-set question was: 'What is the greatest comfort for man dying?' It provoked answers spanning the religious spectrum, from orthodox Catholicism to (supposedly) Lutheranism. Consequently, the volume was almost immediately prohibited.³⁶ The anonymous play from the chamber of rhetoric *De Violieren* [The Gillyflowers] from Antwerp is one of two – the other being a play from the chamber of rhetoric *De Berckenisten* [The Birches] from Kaprijke – in which Reason [*Reden*] is given a prominent role, helping the Mankind character to understand particular soteriological notions, or, as in the case of the Kaprijke play, making him start thinking coherently in the first place, after having been called upon by Conscience [*Conscientie*] to refrain from his sinful exploits in a tavern (much like we saw in the Schiedam play).³⁷ Moreover, through associating Conscience and Reason, the Kaprijke play exemplifies the epistemological link between the two concepts.

Other frequently appearing characters referring to the site or instrument of mental operations were Mind [*Geest*] and Heart [*Hart*].³⁸ Looking over the list of occurrences, *Hart* essentially stood for the nucleus of the human personality,

³³ A. W. Price, *Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 189. See also Lawrence Dewan, *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue: Essays in Thomistic Ethics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 35; and Simo Knuutila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 131–2.

³⁴ On the rise of rationalism in the sixteenth-century Netherlands, see Ruben Buys, *Sparks of Reason: Lay Philosophy and Vernacular Rationalism in the Low Countries* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2015).

³⁵ On the poems written for this contest, see the article by Ruben Buys in this issue.

³⁶ Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, 'Printing Plays: The Publication of the Ghent Plays of 1539 and the Reaction of the Authorities', *Dutch Crossing*, 24 (2000), 265–84, esp. 268–9.

³⁷ *De Gentse spelen van 1539*, ed. B. H. Ern  and L. M. van Dis, 2 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), I, 271–301; II, 435–68. See also Bart Ramakers, 'Eloquent Presence: Verbal, and Visual Discourse in the Ghent Plays of 1539', in Celeste Brusati, Karl A. E. Enekel, and Walter S. Melion (eds.), *The Authority of the Word: Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 217–61, esp. 246–8.

³⁸ Characteristic of *Geest* and *Hart* is that they were rarely applied individually, but usually followed a specifying adjective, indicating the kind of mind or heart – either negative or positive – by which man was driven.

the seat of man's emotions and passions, virtuous as well as vicious.³⁹ *Geest* also denoted mental dispositions that could be positive or negative. Some carried the quantifier *Menig* [Many] in them, such as Many an Artful Mind [*Menig Kunstig Geest*] and Many a Biased Mind [*Menig Partijdig Geest*]. Although adjectives such as *Afgunstig* [Envious] and *Bedrieglijk* [Deceitful] appeared before both, suggesting *Geest* and *Hart* were interchangeable alternatives, there remained a clearly perceived difference between them. This comes to light when we take a glance at characters with names in which *Geest* was preceded by a positive adjective that referred not so much to a mind's *virtuous* as to its *virtuoso* character, that is, to its eagerness, acuteness, and creativity.⁴⁰ The appearance of these characters highlights the rhetoricians' aim for intellectual activity, more specifically for brilliance and agility in the use of one's wits, especially within the realm of the literary arts.⁴¹ We can ascertain this by looking at characters personifying the rhetorical task of invention, that is, the finding of subjects and arguments to constitute the content of a poem or play. Characters named Good Invention [*Goede Inventie*], Poetic Invention [*Poëtelijke Inventie*], and Inventive Mind [*Inventieig Geest*] indeed stood for ingenious creation.

Such intellectual keenness and confidence is best illustrated by another *zinspel* performed at the Antwerp *Haagspel* of 1561, in this case the play by the chamber of rhetoric *De Heibloem* [The Heath Flower] from Turnhout. Besides the arguments in favour of any of the given solutions and the learned sources – classical, biblical, and practical – these were taken from, the participating chambers' intellectual aspirations can be deduced from the names of the characters who formulate these arguments and cite these sources. The Turnhout play features only three personifications: Artful Mind [*Kunstig Geest*], an elegantly dressed young man; and two elderly gentlemen, Mature Mind [*Rijpelijk Verstand*] and Subtle Invention [*Subtiel Verzinnen*], both solemnly dressed as university-trained doctors.⁴² Their names and attire not only illustrate the rhetoricians' belief in the problem-solving prowess of the human mind, its inventiveness and creativity, they likewise express their vision of a learning community encompassing different generations (young and adult) and institutions (chamber of rhetoric and university). Apparently, the practice of the art of rhetoric called for thorough discernment and agile contrivance.

³⁹ Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 8–14; Heather Webb, *The Medieval Heart* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 21–2. The idea of the heart as a *pars pro toto* for an individual's entire being becomes particularly apparent in the names of characters that represented man generally and that consisted of *Hart* preceded by some qualifying adjective and the quantifier *Menig* [Many], such as Many an Oppressed Heart [*Menig Bedrukt Hart*] and Many a Good Heart [*Menig Goed Hart*].

⁴⁰ Besides the aforementioned Many an Artful Mind, characters occurred like Hungry Mind [*Hongerig Geest*], Keen Mind [*Kloeke Geest*], Subtle Mind [*Subtiële Geest*], Inventive Mind [*Inventieig Geest*], Poetic Mind [*Poëtelijk Geest*], and Rhetorical Mind [*Rhetorijkelijk Geest*].

⁴¹ The term *Vernuft* [Ingenuity or Wit], the quality of being clever, original, and inventive, often in the process of applying ideas in order to solve problems or meet challenges, represents a special case. In most allegorical names containing the word *Vernuft* it was combined with *Eigen* [Own] to indicate its subjectivity, amounting to sheer wilfulness.

⁴² *De Antwerpse spelen van 1561*, II, 1358; Vandommele, *Als in een spiegel*, 47–50, 352–4, 357, 363.

The internal, mental sites and functions of thinking and feeling generated thoughts, ideas, passions, and emotions which were deemed benevolent or malicious, right or wrong, and became likewise personified. As in real life, these mental activities were stimulated by both internal and external situations and experiences, which were acted out on stage and could become allegorised as well. This way, the audience could perceive how man's outer and inner worlds intersected. As we have already seen, a very dominant example of such a situation or experience was the tavern, which the Mankind character was tempted into visiting by personifications of evil and falsehood. In the course of the sixteenth century, apart from being a locus of sin in terms of the vices, especially lust, pride, and gluttony – that is, a place of wrong-*doing* – the tavern became a place of wrong-*thinking*, of misinterpretation, misconception, and misunderstanding.

Prototypical personifications of malicious impulse were the *sinnkens*. A character called Sin or Sins [*Zonde(n)*] appeared quite frequently, the latter sometimes preceded by *Menigerlei/Velerlei* [Manifold].⁴³ *Sinnkens* were often portrayed as hiding behind seemingly good behaviour – both verbal and non-verbal – and tried to avoid discovery of their true identity. Of course, negative emotions could take the form of one of the seven cardinal sins.⁴⁴ However, playwrights felt no need to personify all of them in one play, which indicates that they did not conceive of sin in the context of penitential guides or moral treatises listing sins and penances, but approached them from a topical point of view, depending on the issue the *zinnespel* was meant to address.

In plays that featured one of the vices, that vice would sometimes be opposed by a virtue. However, positive characters usually expressed a disposition toward virtue in general, expressed by adjectives such as *Deugd/Deugdelijk* [Virtue/Virtuous].⁴⁵ Of all seven virtues, the three theological – Faith [*Geloof*], Hope [*Hoop*], and Charity [*Liefde*] – dominated.⁴⁶ The prevalence of these, with their strong foundation in the New Testament, indicates that the rhetoricians mainly stayed within the realm of ethical and theological issues.⁴⁷

⁴³ Wrong-doing and wrong-thinking were indicated by nouns and adjectives like *Begeerte/Begeren/Begerlijk* [Desire/Desirous], *Kwaad/Kwade/Kwelijk* [Evil], *Krankheid/Krank* [Sickness/Sick], *Bedrog/Bedrieglijk* [Deceit/Deceitful], *Bedekte* [Hidden], *Geweinsd* [Feigned], *Schijn van* [Façade of], and *Ijdel(e)* [Idle]. Another way to create antagonistic characters was to call them *Eigen* [Selfish], *Veselijk* [Carnal], *Blind* [Blind], *Zinnelijk* [Sensual], *Aards* [Earthly], or *Werelds* [Wordly].

⁴⁴ They appeared either as nouns or as adjectives: *Gierigheid/Gierig* [Greed/Greedy], *Hovaardij/Hovaardig* [Pride/Proud], *Wellust/Wellustig* [Lust/Lustful], and *Nijd/Nijdigheid/Nijdig/Afjonstig* [Envy/Envious]. Close to lust was *Onkuisheid/Onkuis* [Lewdness/Lewd].

⁴⁵ Others were *Goed/Wel* [Good], *Oprecht* [Upright], *Eerlijk* [Honest], *Waar/Waarachtig* [True/Truthful], and *Troostelijk* [Comforting]. Negative adjectives, such as *Eigen* [Selfish] and *Aards* [Earthly], found counterparts in *Gemeen* [Common] and *Eeuwig* [Eternal].

⁴⁶ The cardinal virtues were almost never personified. Only Fortitude [*Kracht*] and Justice [*Rechtvaardigheid*] appeared, albeit in a limited number of cases.

⁴⁷ With the rise of social topics, communal virtues were personified, too, with names containing words such as *Eendracht/Eendrachtigheid/Eendrachtig* [Harmony/Harmonious] and *Vrede/Vreedzaam* [Peace/Peaceful].

Given the fact that many *zinnespelen* addressed specific topics, only particular virtues were personified. Favourite among them was charity.⁴⁸ Neighbourly love and solidarity ranked high among the civic virtues advocated by the rhetoricians. It was especially called upon – and thus personified – in plays to incite generosity towards the poor and weak. Some competitive festivals were organised with the expressed aim of raising money for charitable causes. The most famous was the Haarlem contest of 1606. It marked the start of a lottery, the proceeds of which were allocated to the construction of a new old men's home.⁴⁹ The pre-set question for the *zinnespel* read: 'What reward awaits him who lovingly supports the poor, and what severe punishment him who mercilessly despises them?' In its contribution, written by Zacharias Heyns (the son of Peeter), the Amsterdam chamber of rhetoric *Het Wit Lavendel* [The White Lavender] personified both the benevolent and malevolent forces that caused man to hear or to ignore the cry for help from the poor.⁵⁰

While charity is represented by Love towards one's Neighbour [*Liefde tot zijn Naesten*], avarice is embodied by two *sinnekens* named Unmerciful Greed [*Onbermhertige Giericheyt*] and Self-Interest [*Eygen Eere*]. The contrasting manner of dramatisation is also reflected in the choice for two Mankind characters who represent the extreme ends of the wealth spectrum: State of Poverty [*Arm van State*] and Material Riches [*Rijck van Goede*]. The *sinnekens* cleave unto the latter in order that he may not yield to the implorations for charity by their opponent – implorations that bristle with biblical references. Fortunately, State of Poverty is soon told that an old men's home has been established. He is warmly welcomed there by its director Mercifulness [*Barmherticheyt*] and its maid Deftness [*Wackerheyt*]. And what about Material Riches? Having grown old himself, he fears impending death and retribution. Mercifulness together with Scripture [*Schriptide*] convince him to repent and – more importantly – to give away most of his wealth to the poor.

The pre-set question invited the playwright to present the spectators with alternative ethical positions – hence the personifications of vice and virtue – and to confront them with an Everyman-like character – Material Riches – whose considerations and actions should function as a mirror of their own. They had to be convinced that charity should prevail over thriftiness and that they should buy as many lottery tickets as they could possibly afford. The play's realistic dramaturgy – the *sinnekens*, for example, scare away State of Poverty when he sits down before their door, homeless, hungry, and worn-out with coughing – was clearly meant to arouse sympathy among the audience and to make it think and do the right thing.

⁴⁸ It was frequently preceded by an adjective, as in Brotherly Love [*Broederlijke Liefde*] or combined with its object in a genitive construction, as in Neighbourly Love [*Liefde des Naasten*].

⁴⁹ On the Haarlem lottery and festival, see Boele, *Leden van één lichaam*, 92–104.

⁵⁰ *Const-thoonende ivveel, by de loflijke stad Haerlem, ten versoecke van Trou moet blijken, in 't licht gebracht* (Zwolle: Zacharias Heyns, 1607), fols. lii–Nn4r.

The Amsterdam play was one of many *zinnespelen* in which authoritative knowledge was brought to bear in order to support virtue and counter vice. Whether or not playwrights were aware of the age-old distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*,⁵¹ they clearly differentiated between *Kennis* [Knowledge or Expertise] and *Wijsheid* [Wisdom], between the possession of insight and information and the deeper, philosophically grounded knowledge that made someone not just well informed or learned, but truly sage or wise, able to make correct judgements and decisions.⁵² It is important to realise that knowledge transfer in the *zinnespel* partly amounted to divine revelation. Although God [God] or God the Father [*God de Vader*] were represented directly in some plays, we more frequently come across personifications of the many ways He worked *in* or made Himself known (and knowable) *to* the world. By the use of the adjective *Goddelijk* [Godly/Divine] and the genitive form *Gods* [God's] it was possible to refer to His power and presence without having to represent Him – a necessity certainly for those playwrights who wanted to keep the Second Commandment.⁵³

From the start of the sixteenth century the kind of knowledge these characters conveyed was increasingly taken from the Bible. It should therefore come as no surprise that more than God Himself, the Word through which He spoke was personified. The same happened to its teaching and interpretation. The word *Schriftuur* [Scripture] abounds, both as a substantive, as in the Amsterdam play, and more frequently in its adjective form *Schriftuurlijk* [Scriptural].⁵⁴ The nouns connected to these terms indicated both the means and ends of citing the written account of God's word. *Bewijs* [Proof] referred to the argumentative use of Scripture in plays that sought to provide evidence for a particular ethical or theological point of view. So did the word *Onderwijs* [Teaching]. The use of *Troost* [Comfort] indicated the reassuring effect quoting, referencing, and interpreting the Bible was supposed to have, especially on the Mankind character, who suffered either from a guilty conscience in a moral sense or from a lack of understanding in an intellectual sense.

⁵¹ Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 182.

⁵² Dewan, *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue*, 12, 33–4. We come across *Wijsheid* in combination with a qualifying adjective, like *Diepgrondig* [Profound], *Hemelse* [Heavenly], *Verzochte* [Implored], and *Natuurlijke* [Natural], or another noun (in a genitive construction), which betrays its more sacred origin and connotation, like Spirit of Wisdom [*Geest der Wijsheid*] or Knowledge of Wisdom [*Kennis der Wijsheid*]. Knowledge and wisdom could amount to *Waarheid* [Truth], especially as regards ethical and religious conduct. Truth frequently appeared as a single-word character name.

⁵³ Relatively frequent were Divine Warning [*Goddelijk Waarschuwen*], God's Promise [*Gods Belofte*], God's Ordinance [*Gods Ordonnantie*], and God's Grace [*Genade/Gratie Gods*].

⁵⁴ As in Scriptural Proof [*Schriftuurlijk Bewijs*], Scriptural Teaching [*Schriftuurlijk Onderwijs/Onderwijzing*], or Scriptural Comfort [*Schriftuurlijk Troost*]. It could also be linked to another noun by the genitive article *der* [of], as in Proof [*Bewijs*], Extraction [*Extract*], Counsel [*Raad*], Comfort [*Troost*], Voice [*Voois*], or Law [*Wet*] of Scripture [*der Schrifturen*]. Less frequently the Bible was represented by personifications as Word of God [*Woord Gods*], Word of the Lord [*Woord des Heren*], Word of Truth [*Woord der Waarheid*], and God's Voice [*Stem Gods*].

Thus, personifications of Scripture either made a more pastoral or a more theological impression on the audience, the balance probably tipping towards the latter, given the frequent appearance of personifications such as Evangelical Teacher [*Evangelische Leraar*] and other pedagogical characters.⁵⁵ Interestingly, the number of personifications with names suggesting a top-down, ecclesiastical transfer of information, such as *Predicatie* [Predication], was limited, which indicates that the rhetoricians preferred – and in fact practised themselves – a more horizontal exchange, one of real dialogue, a circumstance that made the *zinnespel* popular in the first place. They strongly believed the stage to be a venue for spreading God's word that was equal to the pulpit. This conviction was expressed in plays in which personifications of Scripture and rhetoric acted as inseparable partners.⁵⁶

In the Antwerp play performed at the Ghent festival of 1539 we come across two personifications of Scripture, one in the prologue, called Scriptural Inquiry [*Schriften Onderzoeken*], and another in the main play, called Preacher of the Word [*Verkondiger des Woords*]. The latter performs a role comparable to that of Spiritual Influence in the aforementioned play from Schiedam which was performed in Rotterdam in 1561. He leads the Mankind character, here called Man Dying [*Stervende Mens*], towards the right answer. Whereas Scriptural Inquiry refers to the activity of Bible study as part of man's intellectual ambition, Preacher of the Word seems to represent an authoritative figure outside him, a teacher or theologian. However, this character too is to be understood as a personification of man's ability to read Scripture for the sake of forming appropriate arguments in particular ethical or religious cases.

WILLPOWER AND THE SENSES

Acts of vice and virtue generally were seen to be the result of willpower or volition, of the exercise of the soul's faculty of willing. It was seen as central to moral life. It related to emotional life as well, in so far as the will acted upon the passions, either by suppressing them or letting man's behaviour be motivated by them. Being a faculty of the soul, will in medieval thinking was linked to the theory of appetite.⁵⁷ It produced the passions of the will, the emotions in the higher powers of the soul.⁵⁸ Since volition could be directed towards good as

⁵⁵ With names that include the word *Getuige* [Witness], *Lering* [Learning], *Raad* [Counsel], *Predicatie* [Predication], *Informatie* [Information], *Instructie* [Instruction], or *Zin* [Meaning].

⁵⁶ B. A. M. Ramakers, 'Een onafscheidelijk stel: Rhetorica en Scriptura in het rederijkerstoneel', in W. Abrahamse, A. C. G. Fleurkens, and M. Meijer Drees (eds.), *Kort Tijt-verdrijf: Opstellen over Nederlands toneel (vanaf ca 1550) aangeboden aan Mieke B. Smits-Veldt* (Amsterdam: A D & L Uitgevers, 1996), 7–14.

⁵⁷ David M. Gallagher, 'The Will and its Acts (Ia IIae, qq. 6–17)', in Stephen J. Pope (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 69–89, esp. 70; Dewan, *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue*, 18–9.

⁵⁸ Gallagher, 'The Will and its Acts', 70; Simo Knuuttila, 'Sixteenth-century Discussions of the Passions of the Will', in Martin Pickavé and Lisa Shapiro (eds.), *Emotion and Cognitive Life in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 116–31, esp. 116–8.

well as bad things, personifications of the will are specified accordingly. Will [*Wil*] as such rarely occurred. We come across either Good Will [*Goede Wil*] or Bad Will [*Kwade Wil*], or other combinations of the noun with a positive or negative adjective. To the sphere of intentional behaviour also belongs Conscience [*Conscientie*], the mental capacity whereby man judges the moral quality of a concrete act.⁵⁹ Although the will was seen as free – at least from a Catholic point of view – the Mankind character needed this moral faculty to assess his behaviour (remember the mirror in Galle's print).⁶⁰ In the aforementioned play from Kaprijke it speaks to him as if it were his inner voice.⁶¹

The close connection between Will and Reason is exemplified by a play by Cornelis Everaert, a fuller, dyer, and guild clerk from Bruges, and a member of two chambers of rhetoric: *The Holy Ghost* [*De Heilige Geest*] and *The Three Female Saints* [*De Drie Santinnen*]. He was a prolific playwright working in the early decades of the sixteenth century. It concerns *Een tafelspeilken up een hoedecken van Marye* [A Table Play on the Chaplet of Mary].⁶² As is customary for table plays, it revolves around the presentation in the course of a banquet of one or more presents. This time the recipient is the king of the Bruges milliners' guild. The play features three personifications: Reason [*Reden*], Sensuality [*Zinnelijkheid*], and Will [*Wille*]. Reason is the centre of attention, since she holds and finally offers the main present, a rosary, the identity of which is gradually revealed during a sequence of questions and answers between the characters.⁶³ Both her name and her position follow from her ability to see and reason about the spiritual meaning of the rosary and to explain it to the other two. While Sensuality and Will offer real hats, Reason presents the king with a metaphorical one, the Middle Dutch word for chaplet or rosary being *hoedecken* [little hat]. All three hats have allegorical names: Temporary Novelty [*Tijdelijke Nieuwigheid*], Anticipative Discretion [*Voorzienige Discretie*], and Fiery Devotion [*Vurige Devotie*]. What the audience saw unfolding was a light yet intricate exchange between the characters about the meaning of and relation between their names and their presents, amounting to a crash course in human psychology. Man's sensuality needs to be controlled by reason with the help of will. Their mutual relation mirrors that between the gifts: Temporary Novelty, handed over by Sensuality, stands for fleeting beauty in the eye of the beholder. Anticipative Discretion, presented by Will, indicates the exercise, through

⁵⁹ Paul Strohm, 'Conscience', in James Simpson, Brian Cummings, and Paul Strohm (eds.), *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 206–23.

⁶⁰ Stuart P. Chalmers, *Conscience in Context: Historical and Existential Perspectives* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), 92–3, 125–6, 137–8; Timothy C. Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 4, *passim*; Sturkenboom, 'The "Simple Burgher"', 36–7.

⁶¹ The name Conscience appears on its own but is often preceded by adjective *Knagende* [Gnawing], in order to express its distressing effect, as in the aforementioned play from Schiedam.

⁶² W. N. M. Hüskén (ed.), *De Spelen van Cornelis Everaert*, 2 vols. (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005), II, 785–802.

⁶³ Bart Ramakers, 'Books, Beads and Bitterness: Making Sense of Gifts in Two Table Plays by Cornelis Everaert', in Sabrina Corbellini, Margriet Hoogvliet, and Bart Ramakers (eds.), *Discovering the Riches of the Word: Religious Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europa* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 141–70, esp. 145–53.

volition, of discretion in worldly affairs. Finally, Fiery Devotion, the gift in Reason's hand, signals man's metaphysical orientation under the aegis of his highest faculty.

Featuring a character as Sensuality and positioning it vis-à-vis Will and Reason indicates a keen awareness on the side of the rhetoricians of the principles of human intellection and moral decision-making. Most of man's thoughts, feelings, and actions resulted from multisensory perception of the outside world. The external senses could be a source of positive knowledge, but they could also lure man into sin. What the senses perceived was processed in the mind and consequently led to knowledge, or conversely, knowledge, helped by reason, was brought to bear on sense perception, so that the Mankind character might draw the right instead of the wrong conclusion and act accordingly.

Together, as Five Senses [*Vijf Zinnen*], personified by one single character, they appear in a number of plays – *Elckerlijc* [Everyman] being one of them. The nature and aim of their activity are sometimes specified by an adjective, as in Subtle Senses [*Subtiel van Zinnen*] and Idle Senses [*IJdel van Zinnen*]. *Zin* [Sense] and its derivatives usually had negative connotations, as in Carnal Sense [*Vleselijke Zin*] and Sensuous Pleasure [*Zinnelijke Geneugte*]. Because of their potential viciousness, leading man into temptation, the senses often appear on stage as *sinnekens* – hence their name.⁶⁴

Although sight was rarely personified, we know from the plays' dialogue and from the frequently inserted living images that seeing was important generally in terms of knowledge acquisition. The same is true for hearing, for the very reason, of course, that drama in performance depended on the audience's ability to use both senses – and in some instances all other senses as well – but also because the *zinnespel* featured so many personifications of elements of rhetoric, its sources, and its circumstances, especially in the realm of religion.⁶⁵

The close connection between rhetoric as practised by the rhetoricians – that is, as vocalised poetry and performed drama – and sensory perception is insightfully illustrated by the *Esbatement van Musijcke ende Rhetorijcke* [Play of Music and Rhetoric], which dates from the middle of the sixteenth century and was written by an unknown playwright from Brabant, probably from Antwerp, named Petrus Cornelisz van Dalem.⁶⁶ The Mankind character in this play, Sensual Youth [*Zinlijke Jonkheid*], whose mind, he says, is inclined towards the arts, wrestles with the dilemma of which art to prefer: rhetoric or music? He has heard

⁶⁴ We rarely come across personifications of individual senses, though. Tasting and smelling are even completely absent.

⁶⁵ Names with *Eloquentie* [Eloquence], *Taal* [Speech], or *Tong* [Tongue] were preceded by adjectives that reflect the rhetoricians' ideal of well-articulated knowledge, such as *Geleerde* [Learned], *Zoetinnige* [Sweet-meaning], *Zoetgrondige* [Sweet-grounded], *Welsprekende* [Well-speaking/Eloquent], and *Schoonsprekende* [Fine-speaking].

⁶⁶ No modern edition exists. See Hummelen, *Repertorium*, no. 1D7. See also Nelleke Moser, *De strijd voor rhetorica: Poëtica en positie van rederijers in Vlaanderen, Brabant, Zeeland en Holland tussen 1450 en 1620* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001), 121–9; and Anke van Herk, *Fabels van liefde: Het mythologisch-amoureuze toneel van de rederijers (1475–1621)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 130–1, 136.

two characters, Mind's Enjoyment [*Geests Verblijden*] and Joyous Being [*Vrolijk Wezen*], literally sing the praise of rhetoric, but he has also heard two *sinnekens*, Ignorant Proposal [*Onwetend Voorstel*] and Many an Evil Heart [*Menig Kwaad Hart*], degrading it, mainly by ridiculing its practitioners, the rhetoricians. Counsellor of the Senses [*Der Zinnen Berader*], after expounding the classical foundations of rhetoric, introduces him to Wise Guidance [*Wijze Beleiding*] and Sweet-grounded Speech [*Zoetgrondige Taal*], whom he calls daughters of rhetoric. They embody the union of wisdom and eloquence playwrights sought so vigorously to achieve, bearing in mind the quotation from Cicero's *De Inventione* (I.1), paraphrased on the first leaf of the play's manuscript, 'that wisdom without eloquence does too little for the good of states, but that eloquence without wisdom is generally highly disadvantageous and is never helpful'.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

In the *zinnespel*, then, personification allegory helped to exteriorise the mental forces and operations that steered human conduct. By projecting thought onto the bodies of concrete characters who wore costumes, carried concrete attributes, and moved within concrete spaces, all with names that referred to their immaterial significance, playwrights created a powerful method of intellectual reflection and instruction. Apart from the cognitively effective combination of aural and visual means, the popularity of the genre can be explained by the fact that it enabled both playwrights and audiences to deal with the mental and the material simultaneously, constantly presenting and explaining the one in terms of the other.

The thematic scope of the *zinnespel* gradually extended from an instrument of mere moral didacticism in the fifteenth century to the major discursive literary genre of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Mankind character became confronted with a great variety of questions and dilemmas, no longer exclusively pertaining to the individual spectator's spiritual well-being here and hereafter, but also to his and his fellow attendants' responsibilities as citizens of the *polis*. Civic communities in the core urban regions of the Low Countries created a multi-layered system of theatrical communication, with the chambers of rhetoric as dominant institutions, the regional and interregional festivals as prime events, and the *zinnespel* as the major discursive genre. The kinds of questions it addressed and the procedures through which it approached them are indicative of the mix of knowledge- and action-oriented learning the rhetoricians aimed to promote.

The above discussion and examples have, I hope, shown that according to the rhetoricians, man, in order to acquire learning, was required to use his mental apparatus in all its constituent parts and elements, showing himself to be a thinking, sensing, feeling, and willing creature. In our last example,

⁶⁷ Van Herk, *Fabels van liefde*, 258, n. 539.

Sensual Youth is presented as a rhetorician-to-be, an apprentice poet. It is through one of his senses – hearing – that he has become attracted to the art of rhetoric, the apparent effect of which is exhilaration (hence the personifications Mind's Enjoyment and Joyous Being), as well as the inspiration to practice the art himself. In this and all of the previous examples, knowledge and wisdom were considered both the source and aim of rhetoric, as Cicero's words succinctly express. In the *zinnespel* the rhetorical process of knowledge creation was literally bodied forth by personifications exemplifying how such knowledge ensued from discursive thought, turning man's wits inside out.

Returning to the comparison between moral play and print, it appears that the former, despite its ephemerality, offered clear experiential advantages over the latter. After all, the bodies which impersonated the allegorical characters appearing in the plays, unlike those in the prints, were real and very much alive. Through their appearance, movement, and speech they offered to their viewers the chance to reach a level of emphatic understanding which the static and silent figures in prints, despite any suggestion of action and dialogue, were less able to achieve.

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