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Michelangelo Moving Time

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Michelangelo Moving Time
by
James P. Anno

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List of Abbreviations

AB: Archivio Buonarroti

CCCM: Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis

CCSL: Corpus Christianorum Series Latina

PL: Patrologia Latina

<u>Acknowledgments</u>

Dedicated to Kimberly

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Michelangelo Moving Time

by

James P. Anno

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History and Archaeology

Washington University in St. Louis, 2017

Professor William E. Wallace, Chair

Michelangelo's painting and sculpture have long been lauded for their clarity of form and force of expression. But his approach to figural narrative is far more elusive. Space and its representation in Renaissance art have enjoyed considerable attention; however, the corresponding problem of movement and its relationship to time remains understudied. A feature particular to Michelangelo's work is his compression of multiple narrative moments into one work of art. By asserting that the movement of Michelangelo's figures is an agent of temporal duration, this project investigates the interrelationship of time and movement in Michelangelo's art. Drawing upon the philosophy of time in the Renaissance, I provide an interpretive re-appraisal of select works by the master, and a more robust account of time perception in the Renaissance. The result is a reflection on how our own cultural perceptions of time have affected our understanding of Renaissance art.

Introduction

Michelangelo's painting and sculpture have long been lauded for their clarity of form and force of expression. But his approach to figural narrative has proved far more elusive, and has largely defied attempts at strict art-historical categorization. In 1435, Leon Battista Alberti asserted in his treatise *On Painting* that a picture should present a "window unto the world," where the unity of time, place and action is observed.[1] As a result, the prevailing scholarly approach to narrative in Renaissance art often presupposes that a painting or sculpture represents a single moment frozen in time.[2]

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[1] Alberti published the first Latin edition of *De pictura* in 1435, followed by an Italian edition, *Della pittura*, in 1436. "Qual cosa così essere, dimostra ciascuno pittore quando sé stessi de quello dipinge sé pone a lunge, dutto dalla natura, quasi come ivi cerchi la punta e angolo della pirramide, onde intende le cose dipinte meglio remirarsi." "First of all, on the surface which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen." Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1956), 51. Alberti's formula of a "window unto the world" where the unity of time, place, and action is observed is reflective of the "classical unities" in Aristotle's *Poetics*. See, Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Samuel H. Butcher (New York: Hill & Wang, 1961), 274-301, esp. 297.

[2] Lew Andrews addresses the "single moment" interpretive disposition in Renaissance art historiography at length. Lew Andrews, *Story and Space in Art: The Rebirth of Continuous Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 14-33. Important examples of interpretive approaches that suggest a picture can depict more than one moment include: Ernst H. Gombrich, *Means and Ends: Reflections on the History of Fresco Painting* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976); William E. Wallace, "Narrative and Religious Expression in Michelangelo's Pauline Chapel," *Artibus et Historiae* 10:19 (1989): 107-121; Jack Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), esp. 181-222; Leo Steinberg, "Who's Who in Michelangelo's Creation of Adam: A Chronology of the Picture's Reluctant Self-Revelation," *Art Bulletin* 74:4 (1992): 552-566; Leo Steinberg, *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper* (New York: Zone, 2001).

Space and its representation in art, prompted by the invention of mathematical perspective in the Renaissance, has enjoyed considerable attention; however, the corresponding problem of movement and its relationship to time has remained understudied.[3] From the *Doni Tondo* (c. 1504) to his lesser-known *Rondanini Pietà* sculpture (c. 1555-1564), a salient feature particular to Michelangelo's work is his compression of multiple narrative moments into one work of art, and the concomitant synthesis of apparently diverse subject matter into a single object (figs. 5, 69, respectively). This dissertation investigates the interrelationship of time and movement in Michelangelo's art. It posits that the movement of Michelangelo's figures is an agent of temporal duration: a compositional suture that knits together disparate moments in time.

Scholarship on time in Renaissance art most often analyzes objects that express "time" as their subject. This class of objects includes: personifications of time in painting and sculpture, illustrations of the zodiac and seasons of the year in illuminated manuscripts and fresco, and moralizing *memento mori* objects that remind the viewer of death's imminence.[4] My project, by contrast, investigates the philosophy of time

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[3] See Ernst Gombrich, "Moment and Movement in Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964): 293-306, esp. 293-295. For select resources on perspective in Renaissance art, see Michael Kubovy, *The Psychology of Perspective in Renaissance Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987); Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Samuel Y. Edgerton, *The Mirror, the Window, and the Telescope: How Renaissance Linear Perspective Changed Our Vision of the Universe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[4] The most recent treatment of Renaissance art that takes "time" as its subject is Simona Cohen's excellent book, Simona Cohen, *Transformations of Time and Temporality in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). For a comprehensive bibliography

operative in the Renaissance as a means to recover the interrelatedness of time and

movement from an historical perspective.[5]

of representations of time in Medieval and Renaissance art, see Cohen, *Transformations*, 339- 351. For select fundamental resources, see, Erwin Panofsky, "Father Time," *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 69-94; Harry Bober, "The Zodiacal Miniatures of the Très Riches Heures of the Duke of Berry: its sources and meaning," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 12 (1948): 1-34; Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. II (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 71-139; Fritz Saxl, *Macrocosm and Microcosm in Medieval Pictures* (London: Warburg Institute, 1957); Peter Springer, "Trinitas-Creator-Annus, Beiträge zur mittelaterlichen Trinitäs-ikonograqphie," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 38 (1976): 17-46; Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Maia Wellington Gahtan, "Time's Narrative in the Italian Renaissance Imagination," (PhD Thesis, Yale University, 1995); Christian Heck and Kristen Lippincott, eds., *Symbols of Time in the History of Art* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).

[5] For historical accounts of time in philosophy and culture, see Julius T. Fraser, ed., *The Voices of Time: A Cooperative Survey of Man's Views of Time as Expressed by the Sciences and by the Humanities* (New York: George Braziller, 1966); Charles M. Sherover, *The Human Experience of Time: The Development of its Philosophic Meaning* (New York: New York University Press, 1975); Wesley C. Salmon, *Space, Time, and Motion: A Philosophical Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Gerald J. Whitrow, *The Natural Philosophy of Time*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Richard Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion: Theories in Antiquity and Their Sequel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Gerald J. Whitrow, *Time in History: The Evolution of Our General Awareness of Time and Temporal Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Paul Davies, *About Time: Einstein's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995); John Spencer Hill, *Infinity, Faith, and Time* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bantam, 1998); Igor D. Novikov, *The River of Time*, trans. Vitaly Kisin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Philip Turetzky, *Time: Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Lawrence W. Fagg, *The Becoming of Time: Integrating Physical and Religious Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Robert Hannah, *Time in Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

Sir Isaac Newton's (1643-1727) formulation of absolute time (time that exists independently of any other variable) in mathematical terms in his *Principia mathematica* of 1687 signaled a conceptual watershed, in which time was no longer solely in the domain of speculative philosophy and no longer coupled with movement. Newton defined time as:

> Absolute, true, and mathematical time, in and of itself and of its own nature, without reference to anything external, flows uniformly and by another name is called duration. Relative, apparent, and common time is any sensible and external measure (precise or imprecise) of duration by means of motion; such a measure – for example, an hour, a day, a month, a year – is commonly used instead of true time.[6]

Newton's definition of absolute time does not resonate with Renaissance perspectives on time. Renaissance thinkers made few original contributions to the philosophy of time. Instead of breaking new ground, they looked to the past, translating ancient Greek texts and consulting commentaries authored by Doctors of the Church.[7] Plato's (d. 348 BC) *Timaeus*, Aristotle's (385-323 BC) *Physics*, and Saint Augustine's (354-430 AD) *Confessions* Book XI were the foundational texts on the philosophy of time, and a primary source of inspiration for Renaissance humanists, including the

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[6] Isaac Newton, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans. Ierome Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 408.

[7] For an introduction to philosophy in the Renaissance, see, Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanistic Strains* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955); Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Philosophy and the Medieval Tradition* (Latrobe, PA: Archabbey Press, 1966); Charles Trinkaus, *Renaissance Transformations of Late Medieval Thought* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). For Renaissance humanists and the translation of Patristic texts, see, Charles Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers: Ambrogio Traversari (1368-1439)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977).

celebrated Neoplatonist philosopher and monk, Marsilio Ficino, who was the first to translate and publish the entirety of Plato's *Timaeus* from Greek to Latin in 1484.[8] The Renaissance philosophical understanding of time was therefore fundamentally retrospective.

In the sixteenth century, the question of time was understood cosmologically. That is, the passage of time was knowable through the perception of motion. In Renaissance thought, movement even begets the flow of time. This begins with the heavens being set in motion, creating the daily structure of time moving from dark to light, season to season, year to year. Such logic extends to sundials, grains of sand passing through an hourglass, and hands moving on a clock. Although such phrases as "time stood still" and "time flies" still persist in modern parlance, the context of their cosmological origins has been lost. Our post Newtonian sense of time represents a sea change in temporal conceptualization, thus requiring a historical perspective to appreciate Michelangelo's creative employment of movement as an agent of duration in his art.[9]

The first chapter of my dissertation establishes a conspectus of the philosophy of time from antiquity through the Renaissance, disciplined by a special focus on the interrelationship of time and movement. Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine are our primary protagonists for the first portion of chapter one, as their contributions to the philosophy of

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[8] Marsilio Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1962); Michael J.B. Allen and Valery Ress, eds. *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leidein: Brill, 2002).

[9] Both Stephen Hawking and Igor Novikov assert that contemporary perceptions of time derive from the Newtonian model of absolute time. We will address this possibility in Ch. 1. Hawking, *Brief History of Time*, 22; Novikov, *River of Time*, 31.

time provides the core substance of early modern temporal perception. Between the chronological span of Augustine and Newton, we pause for a Renaissance interlude to consider the specific ways antique philosophies of time manifested itself in Renaissance culture, including a discussion of the mechanical clock, Petrarch's (1304-1374) *Trionfo del Tempo*, and Girolamo Savonarola's (1452-1498) *The Triumph of the Cross*.

The first chapter then continues with a consideration of Newton's formulation of absolute time and its subsequent incorporation into Enlightenment art theory, including theoretical treatises by Lord Shaftesbury (1617-1713), James Harris (1709-1780) and Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781). Based upon Newtonian physics, we discern how Enlightenment art theorists postulated that a picture or sculpture may only depict a *punctum temporis*, or a single point of time. The first chapter then concludes with Albert Einstein's revision of Newton's theory of absolute time, providing a means to distinguish Renaissance perceptions of time (pre-Newtonian) from those of our own age. Chapter one therefore aims to provide a historically conscious interpretive platform from which the question of time and movement in Michelangelo's art may be approached.

The dissertation then proceeds with a series of three case studies organized around the *Doni Tondo* (c. 1504), the *Risen Christ* (1519-20) and *Rondanini Pietà* (1555-64) (figs. 5, 17, 69, respectively). These works span a broad chronological range of Michelangelo's career, represent objects in both painting and sculpture, and provide a broader structure to incorporate additional works into my analysis. Chapters two through four aim to interpret key iconographic paradoxes, specific to each object, which have

otherwise remained unresolved. The operative thesis throughout is that each object

expresses a temporal continuum rather than a single moment in time.

Chapter two proposes that the *Doni Tondo* (c. 1504) is a picture about the end of

the world. Building upon Charles de Tolnay's symbolic reading of the painting, I posit

that the background of the tondo pictures the remote Edenic past where sin first entered

the world.[10] Progressing forward in time to the middle ground, we witness the removal of

sin through the rite of Baptism. In the foreground we encounter Christ's ambiguous

staging between mother and father that expresses a great Christological mystery – a

Christ everywhere present and filling all things. Christ's implied movement "in and out"

of the tondo's pictorial space thus catalyzes a temporal continuum that terminates in the

viewer's space at the end of time with the Second Coming of Christ. I utilize the internal

logic of medieval *mappae mundi* (maps of the world) as an analytic tool to illumine how

salvific time was thought to move across space. Girolamo Savonarola's apocalyptic

preaching in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century provides the social context of

Michelangelo's motivation to depict the end of the world.

Chapter three analyzes the *Risen Christ* sculpture within its liturgical context in

the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome. Specifically, I identify the liturgical

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[10] See Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Youth*, vol. 1 of 5, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 165. Tolnay proposes that the *Doni Tondo's* middle ground represents the world *ante legem* (before the law) prior to Moses' reception of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. In the foreground, the figures of Joseph and Mary embody the world *sub lege* (under the law), between the dispensation of the law to Moses, and the Incarnation of Christ. Christ, according to Tolnay, thus represents the world *sub gratia* (under grace) and the New Covenant. While I abandon Tolnay's *ante legem – sub lege – sub gratia* scheme, the basic structure of his thought is nonetheless pivotal for my discussion.

prayer of *anamnesis* (memorial sacrifice) as the *Risen Christ's* overarching theme. The anamnesis prayer, directly following the consecration of the Eucharist in the Roman Mass, recapitulates Christ's salvific deeds of Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension. As the *Risen Christ* presents iconographic features corresponding to the subjects of Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, simultaneously – I argue that Michelangelo synthesizes the subjects within a Eucharistic context, where the figure's forward stepping right foot implies Christ's movement into the actual Eucharist celebrated upon the altar below the sculpture. By sculpting the anamnesis prayer in stone, and investing the figure of Christ with forward movement, Michelangelo creates a *transitus domini* ("passing by of the Lord") fundamental to Eucharistic theology. The experience of *seeing* the Eucharist in early modern liturgical practice is thus essential to my analysis.

Chapter four interprets the *Rondanini Pietà*, Michelangelo's last sculpture, through an autobiographical lens of the aged artist's desire for rest in Christ at the end of his life. Like the *Doni Tondo* and *Risen Christ*, the *Rondanini Pietà* combines multiple subjects simultaneously, including the Descent from the Cross, the Entombment, and perhaps even the Resurrection. Unlike the *Doni Tondo* and the *Risen Christ*, however, I argue that Michelangelo suspends the implied movement of the *Rondanini Pietà's* figures to achieve an atemporal stasis that expresses the timeless, changeless, beatific rest in Christ. Central to my argument is the nature of Michelangelo's substantial revision of the sculpture from its initial conception to its final composition. I posit that the artist encountered a marring dark vein in the marble that traversed the face of Christ, instigating Michelangelo to recarved the work with a new iconography. I interpret

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Michelangelo's refusal to abandon the group as a kinesthetic act of prayer, where beatific rest is found through motion – a paradox I call the metaphysics of carving.

Central to my analysis of Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* and *Rondanini Pietà* is the necessity to view these sculptures from multiple angles to ascertain the full range of their iconographic programs. I give extended consideration to how the artist composes the shape of each sculpture's *base* to facilitate viewing from multiple angles.

My methodological approach is interdisciplinary and marshals resources from the philosophy of time, iconography, theology, and social history including, for example, the millennial thinking around 1500 that informs my approach to the *Doni Tondo* (c. 1504). The project also draws upon objects of material culture outside the domain of the fine arts, notably liturgical objects on which Christian typologies are often displayed and conflated in unexpected ways.

Taking the relationship of time and movement in the Renaissance philosophy of time as its starting point, this dissertation presents an interpretive re-appraisal of some of Michelangelo's key artistic achievements. This dissertation seeks to provide a robust account of time consciousness and time perception in Renaissance art and thought. As a result, the project reflects on current trends in time consciousness, and brings into sharper focus how our own broad cultural conceptions of time have affected our understanding of Renaissance art.

Chapter 1:
Necessary Work: Time, Movement and Temporal Perception

1.1 Introduction

Tempus fugit: time flies.[1] This originary phrase from the great Latin poet Virgil (70-19 BCE) has spawned a series of cognate expressions that remain deeply embedded in contemporary parlance and the modern psyche. Phrases such as "time flies," "time marches on," and "time stood still" operate on multiple registers, indicating the psychological processes of relating the transience of time to human experience. But the language itself betrays a much deeper coupling of concepts that have a historical and cosmological pedigree: each phrase couples "time" with action verbs of motion such as "flies," "marches," or the inverse "stood." While such colloquial phrases may seem innate to the human categorization of past, present, and future – the duplex union of time and movement actually springs from longstanding philosophical and theological discourses on time within the Western intellectual tradition.

Human existence is a temporal existence. It is embedded "in time." As the twentieth century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein suggests, any definition of time may be beyond the kin of human thought.[2] The difficulty of defining time may be

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[1] Virgil's phrase originates from the *Georgics* where he expresses the concept as "*fugit inreparabile tempus*: it escapes, irretrievably time." Virgil, *Georgics*, 3.284. See also, Monica R. Gale, *Virgil On the Nature of Things: The Georgics, Lucretius, and the Didactic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations,"* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), 1, 26. Cited from Douglas Estes, *The Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel: A Theory of Hermeneutical Relativity in the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 31. My argument in

productively drawn by means of analogy. Time is a bowl, and we are fish within it. Even

if a smart fish realizes it is within the bowl, its purview of understanding in regards to the

nature of the bowl is fundamentally conditioned and limited by its "enbowledness." The

fish may postulate experience outside the bowl, but such an exercise will always denote

some degree of conjecture. Substituting the fish for the present reader, we may propose as

Douglas Estes suggests:

> In ordinary language, time is discussed in terms of metaphors, many of which
> bring with them the image of time flowing like a liquid, of time being a sort of
> stuff that can be stopped up, or spent, or used carelessly…As an individual moves
> from one event to the next, moves from earlier to later, time appears to *flow*.[3]

Time has a history. That is, the way we *think* about time and organize our

experience of it has a history. And while some vestiges of the early modern modes of

temporal perception persist into the present, we nonetheless fundamentally think about

time differently than our forbearers. Rooted in antique philosophy and Christian

theology, the era of Michelangelo and his contemporaries viewed time to be the product

of a cosmological order where the movement of the heavens produced and perpetuated

time. In a sense, movement indicated, even begat time, and the author of this order was

Christ (Jn. 1:1-3). Thus time and movement were co-dependent variables, with the

constant term being Christ. Isaac Newton's (1643-1727 AD) introduction of the concept

of "absolute time" - that is time independent of any other variables (including movement)

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the following chapter benefits greatly from Estes' learned overview of the philosophy of
time from antiquity to the present.

[3] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 37, 35, respectively.

- has thus become the inheritance of our temporal perception.[4] Many suppose, therefore, that time marches on without regard to anything beyond its absolute, constant nature.

The objective of this chapter is to investigate how an historical understanding of temporal perception may illumine our approach to Michelangelo's narrative sensibility. What intellectual equipment could Michelangelo have brought to understanding, conceiving, and constructing his compositions in light of the prevailing notions of time in his era? Specifically, how may the interrelation of time and movement inform his approach to sacred subject matter, especially when depicting the Christ whose dual nature (divine and human) places him both in, and outside of time?[5] And finally, how might our historically removed notions of temporal perception present obstacles in discerning Michelangelo's innovative approach to figural narrative? In a sense, encountering our own temporal sensibilities must be concomitant with the attempt to understand his.

All art is temporal: spoken, written, painted, sculpted, constructed, found, arranged, etc., *ad infinitum*. It comes into being, and perhaps perishes. There was a moment before it existed, moments during its existence, and possibly moments after it ceases to exist. Whether the artwork's subject(s) intentionally addresses time is of no consequence from this perspective. Like us, the artwork is just another fish in the bowl. From this vantage point, the question of time, and even notions of temporal perspective,

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[4] Igor D. Novikov, *The River of Time*, trans. Vitaly Kisin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31. We will address the Newtonian postulation of time in detail in the section on Newton.

[5] The Incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, the Christ, squarely puts him within time and human history. Yet, he is also the eternally begotten Son of God, existing before all ages, co-eternal with the Father.

is not alien to an artwork, but a fundamental component of its ontology. Our interest in Michelangelo's work is how the artist manipulates figural movement as a means of catalyzing the perceived equivalent of a temporal flow. By making his Christ move in a manner particular to its subject, the artist evokes a broad temporal range that approximates the paradox of Christ's expansive temporality. It's a practical solution to a profound problem. By compressing the artwork with multiple subjects simultaneously, implied movement has the power to elicit a sense of duration.

Throughout this chapter we will investigate the intellectual history of time and movement as articulated by the Western tradition's most influential commentators on time: Plato (d. 348 BC), Aristotle (385-323 BC), St. Augustine (354-430 AD), Isaac Newton (1643-1727 AD), and Albert Einstein (1879-1955 AD).[6] By tracing the trajectory of their thought, we may encounter ideas both alien and familiar, with the aim of defining and distinguishing early modern perceptions of time from our own. Limiting the core of our discussion to the work of only five individuals is reductive, but necessary. The literature on time is truly vast, and a schematic approach to the most paradigmatic concepts enhances our thrust to situate the intellectual history of time and movement.

While the opening chapter may leave the frequent reader of art history feeling slightly denuded in the absence of copious images, the task at hand is necessary work.

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[6] Investigations into the temporal theories of cultures beyond the Western tradition, while equally fascinating, lie beyond the scope of this chapter. For general references to non-Western theories, see Julius T. Fraser, ed.. *The Voices of Time: A Cooperative Survey of Man's View of Time as Expressed by the Sciences and by the Humanities* (London: Penguin, 1968); H. James Birx, ed., *Encyclopedia of Time: Science, Philosophy, Theology, & Culture*, 3 vols. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009).

We seek first principles, as according to Aristotle, that "which has principles, causes, and elements, scientific knowledge and understanding stems from a grasp of these…we should begin by trying to decide about its principles."[7] The trajectory of our inquiry begins by establishing the relation of time and movement in intellectual history. The result, rather than a conclusion in itself, forms the foundation of the art historical analysis that follows. We seek to understand the internal logic of a select number of Michelangelo's compositions in relation to his approach to figurative narrative. To approach how Michelangelo moves time, let us begin with Plato.

1.2 Plato: Time as the Moving Image of Eternity

While not the first ancient Greek philosopher to ruminate on the nature of time, Plato (d. 348 BC) nonetheless put forth the most developed physical account of time in his dialogic treatise known as the *Timaeus* (c. 360 BC). The *Timaeus* proceeds as a conversation between the fictive character Timaeus and Socrates, amongst others. In their conversation, Timaeus expounds upon the origin of the cosmos and the nature of human beings. From this dialogue we glean that Plato was a theist, and this primary god or *Demiurge* executed the fundamental task of creating the cosmos and everything in it. Also emergent is Plato's famous explication of ideal form and its relation to all material things, including humans. The ideal is perfect and eternal; the material is but a shadowy approximation of its perfect form as counterpart, and is subject to change. The *Timaeus* is also deeply teleological. Preexistent matter, as Robin Waterfield observes, was brought

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[7] Aristotle, *Physics*, I.1. Cited from Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9.

from chaos to order by a craftsman god, the demiurge, who imbued the elements, the cosmos and all living things with a "teleological ordering."[8]

1.2.1 Plato's Forbearers

For Plato, time was real, but the same cannot be said about several of his predecessors. Parmenides of Elea (c. 500 BC) may be the first pre-Socratic philosopher to write about time, as well as the first to question its existence.[9] Parmenides' follower, Zeno of Elea (c. 490-430 BC), also posited that time was not real.[10] Heraclitus (c. 540-480 BC) however proposed that time was real, and framed his conclusion metaphorically in terms of change: "You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you."[11] Heraclitus' evocative metaphor draws several concepts together simultaneously regarding his insights on time. Change – a factor refined by Plato –

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[8] Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), ix. For select resources on Plato and the *Timaeus*, see, James G. Lennox, "Plato's Unnatural Teleology," *Platonic Investigations*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 1985), 195-218; Catherine Osborne, "Space, Time, Shape, and Direction: Creative Discourse in the *Timaeus*," *Form and Argument in Late Plato*, eds. Christopher Gill and Mary M. McCabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 179-211; Tomás Calvo and Luc Brisson, eds., *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias* (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 1997); Thomas K. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[9] Rosemary Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 126.

[10] For an accessible analysis of 'Zeno's Paradox" of Achilles and the Tortoise, see, Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 47. For a more technical treatment, see, Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 321-335.

[11] Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 52-53, 166-169.

indicates that everything in the cosmos is in flux. This is in contrast to that which is eternal, unmoving, unchanging, and forever perfect. Change is thus a by-product of creation, and an indicator of temporal passage, as change occurs through duration in time. Motion also figures in to Heraclitus' metaphor of the flowing river. Not only are the waters of the river in flux, but also they literally pass by the observer within it. Time thus has the quality of flow; it moves, and we can *see* it move via local phenomena. Heraclitus therefore asserts that change, and therefore time, is the essence of reality.[12]

Plato also believed time was real, and articulated a significant distinction between static and dynamic forms. Static forms are eternal and unchanging, and therefore exist outside of time. Dynamic forms change and are subject to decay and corruption, and are therefore within time. As Douglas Estes explains, "…Plato maintained that reality, and anything occupying a spatial dimension within reality, is really a dichotomized entity comprising a pure form as well as an individual manifestation of that pure form."[13]

1.2.2 Plato's Definition of Time

Plato, through the voice of Timaeus, sets out to define time and the phenomenon of the human being within it by setting a grand cosmological stage that explains how the cosmos came to be, and the human experience within such a cosmos. Although Plato's philosophizing may seem abstracted, the *Timaeus* is nonetheless a work of natural

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[12] Abram Cornelius Benjamin, "Ideas of Time in the History of Philosophy," *The Voices of Time: A Comparative Survey of Man's Views of Time Expressed by the Sciences and by the Humanities*, ed. Julius T. Fraser (London: Penguin, 1968), 9.

[13] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 49. See Plato, *Timaeus*, 51-52, in Waterfield, 43-46. From here forward, I will cite the *Timaeus* only by title and chapter (e.g., Plato, *Timaeus*, 51-52).

philosophy, and therefore addresses the physical world by means of speculative

observation. For his definition of time, Plato begins:

> When the father-creator saw that his creation had been set in motion and was
> alive…he was pleased and in his joy he determined to make his creation resemble
> its model even more closely…But the being that served as the model was eternal,
> and it was impossible for him to make this altogether an attribute of any created
> object. Nevertheless, he determined to make it a kind of moving likeness of
> eternity, and so in the very act of ordering the universe he created a likeness of
> eternity, a likeness that progresses eternally through the sequence of numbers,
> while eternity abides in oneness. This image of eternity is what we call 'time,'
> since along with the creation of the universe he devised and created days, nights,
> months, and years, which did not exist before the creation of the universe. They
> are all parts of time, and 'was' and 'will be' are created aspects of time which we
> thoughtlessly and mistakenly apply to that which is eternal.[14]

1.2.3 Eternality of Form vs. Flux of the Cosmos

Plato synthesizes a host of interrelated variables in his creation story that at once

projects into the eternal realm of the 'father-creator' (demiurge), as well as touching

ground to the human experience within the created cosmos. How do we understand the

relation between time and movement proposed in the *Timaeus*? First, the cosmos is

created from preexistent matter and shaped into the heavens and earth. The action of the

demiurge in shaping the cosmos thus in itself demarks a distinction between the demiurge

(that which is eternal) and the work of his hand (that which is not). In order to achieve the

desired likeness between creator and created, the demiurge set the heavens in motion, in

order to make it a "moving image of eternity." Because the heavens move, they are

subject to "enumeration" as a matter of sequence and duration, as opposed to eternity that

abides in "oneness," or in the absence of enumeration. The first constituent of time Plato

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[14] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37 d-e.

defines is thus understood as the moving image of eternity – a dichotomy between pure

form and its material counterpart.[15]

Time, Movement, and the Celestial Bodies

Importantly for our discussion and the physical experience of seeing time "move,"

Plato also asserts that along with the creation of the universe, the demiurge devised and

created "days, nights, months, and years, which did not exist before the creation of the

universe."[16] Time is divided, and perceptible, by witnessing the solar movements of the

heavenly bodies. Time moves, and therefore changes, with the rising and setting of the

sun and subsequent seasons – the byproduct of "enumeration." Is time passing? Watch

the sun move through the sky and the answer will be ascertained. According to Plato, we

experience time through change which is perceptible by the movement of heavenly and

proximal bodies; a process wholly alien to eternal form. Thus, temporal distinctions of

'was' and 'will be' pertain to us, but not the demiurge that abides in oneness.[17] As the

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[15] For a synopsis of Plato's creation account, and its component of time and movement, see, Sorabji, *Time, Creation, Continuum*, 108-112, 268-276; John Whittaker, "The 'Eternity' of the Platonic Forms," *Phronesis* 13:2 (1968): 131-144; Leonardo Tarán, "The Creation Myth in Plato's *Timaeus*," *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, eds. John P. Anton, George L. Kustas and Anthony Preus (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1971), 372-407; Gabriela R. Carone, "Creation in the *Timaeus*: The Middle Way," *Apeiron* 37 (2004): 211-226. See also, Wesley C. Salmon, *Space, Time, and Motion: A Philosophical Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 2-3, 27.

[16] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37 d-e.

[17] For motion in Plato's *Timaeus*, see Richard Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion: Theories in Antiquity and Their Sequel* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1988), 219, 250-251.

motions of the heavens beget time, Plato concludes, "This means that people in general fail to appreciate that the wanderings of the five planets…do constitute time."[18]

Time, created by the demiurge connects the mundane world and the eternal forms, as the moving image of eternity is best understood in light of the circular motions of celestial bodies.[19] For Plato, time and motion are inextricably bound, where time and its passage is perceptible by seeing things move, the most prominent being the heavenly bodies. Movement = Time; Time = Duration; Duration = Movement. The duplex relation of time and movement is therefore an interdependent closed circuit of phenomena. Plato's closed circuit coupling of time and movement proved contentious for later philosophers, particularly for his pupil Aristotle. However, both Plato and Aristotle were in ultimate agreement, with Heraclitus, that time does exist.[20]

1.3 Aristotle: Time as the Number of Movement

Plato's most brilliant student, Aristotle (385-323 BC), brought his teacher's elegant cosmological view of time, where time and movement are co-dependent factors, to its knees. As Douglas Estes describes, Aristotle's thought on time "was in many ways a departure from earlier Greek thought."[21] Generally, Aristotle abstained from cosmological explanations of the nature of time, and rather focused on empirical, micro

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[18] Plato, *Timaeus*, 39 d.

[19] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 50; Gerald J. Whitrow, *Time in History: The Evolution of Our General Awareness of Time and Temporal Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 41

[20] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 50.

[21] Ibid., 61.

considerations in his analysis. The philosophical result led to the collapse of the unchecked conclusion that we may equate time with any one motion or event.[22] Aristotle's revolution of the study of time resulted from his focus on local phenomena rather than cosmological axioms. This 'bottom up' approach, according to Philip Turetzky, emphasized the role of micro, observable phenomena, and produced the first empirical, scientific treatment of time.[23]

1.3.1 Aristotle's Definition of Time

Aristotle's commitment to studying the physics of local bodies lacks the narrative bravado of Plato's proposal in the *Timaeus*, but excels in the precision of his ideas and language. Motion for Aristotle is more fundamental than time, and his discussion on time springs from his desire, ultimately, to understand the nature of motion. Aristotle provides his definition of time in the *Physics*:

> We recognize time when we set boundaries to motion, bounding it by before and after. And we say that time has elapsed when we take notice of the before and after in motion…But when we perceive a before and after, then we say there is time. For this is what time is: the number of motion in respect of before and after. So time is not motion, but exists in so far as motion contains number.[24]

Aristotle's definition of time as "the number of motion in respect of before and after" is admittedly difficult to decipher, and has sparked debate, if not controversy, for

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[22] Whitrow, *Time in History*, 42.

[23] Philip Turetzky, *Time* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 18.

[24] Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106. From here forth, Aristotle's *Physics* will be cited: Aristotle, *Physics*, IV.11, according to book and section (respectively).

millennia.[25] The key terms of his definition in relation to time are number, motion, and before and after. We may consider time for Aristotle to be a means of counting motion, although, importantly, he does not equate time with the measurement itself.[26] And while Aristotle utilizes time to measure motion, he does not limit this to physical motion, but also to the measurement of change itself.[27] Crucial to our understanding of how Aristotle defines time as the number of before and after, is that 'before' and 'after' are conceived more as a spatial factor than a temporal factor.[28] 'Before' and 'after' considered spatially is perhaps the key to understanding Aristotle's byzantine definition: his language is clear, the concepts are challenging.

<div align="center">Time as Points on a Line?</div>

As the contemporary historian Gerald Whitrow suggests, Aristotle's conception is close to viewing time as existing on an absolute axis by which phenomena can be measured, as if time has a geometrical structure – a notion that Isaac Newton (1643-1727

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[25] For a survey of the interpretive field in relation to Aristotle's definition of time, see, Sorabji, *Time, Creation, Continuum*, 86-97; Julia Annas, "Aristotle, Number, and Time," *Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1975): 97-113; Gwilym E.L. Owen, "Aristotle on Time," *Motion and Time, Space and Matter: Interrelations in the History and Philosophy of Science*, eds. Peter Machamer and Robert Turnbull (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 24-25; David Bostock, "Aristotle's Account of Time," *Phronesis* 25 (1980): 148-169; Sarah Waterlow, "Aristotle's Now," *Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1984): 104-128; Tony Roark, *Aristotle on Time: A Study of the Physics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[26] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 61.

[27] Aristotle, *Physics*, IV.14.

[28] Aristotle, *Physics*, IV.6.

AD) utilized to profound effect.[29] Furthermore, Aristotle's foreshadowing movement towards Newton's absolute time is also expressed in his view that time exists as a continuum comprised of 'nows.'[30] Accordingly, each 'now' is an indivisible point in time *without* duration.[31] Philip Turetzky explains:

> While there is a succession of nows in the continuum of time, the now is analogous to a point on a line. As a line cannot be made up of points, time cannot be made up of nows. Neither two points nor two nows can be next to one another; for between any two points or nows there exist an indefinite number of points or nows.[32]

1.3.2 Time as a Number But Perceived as Motion

The heart of our interest resides in clarifying how Aristotle conceived the relation between time and movement. Given his microscopic examination of time as a number, we can discern that infinite "nows," like points on a line, succeed one another and enumerate the effect of duration in time. However, for a 'now' to truly remain a 'now,' it must exist in isolation. According to Aristotle, time is like a line that can be infinitely subdivided, but each 'now' remains separated by means of its durationless quality. Aristotle is thus the ancestral progenitor of the concept of absolute time that can be plotted on a spatial coordinate system.

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[29] Aristotle, *Physics*, IV.12, VII. 1-5; Gerald J. Whitrow, *The Natural Philosophy of Time*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 180-181.

[30] Aristotle, *Physics*, VI.1; Turetzky, *Time*, 18.

[31] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 61; Turetzky, *Time*, 18; David Bostock, "Aristotle's Account of Time," *Aristotle: Critical Assessments*, vol. 2, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (London: Routledge, 1999), 147.

[32] Turetzky, *Time*, 23. See also Aristotle, *Physics*, VI.1; Bostock, "Aristotle's Account of Time," 154.

Aristotle's role in the development of the philosophical and scientific study of time is profound, and served as the standard model for temporal understanding until Isaac Newton revolutionized our collective understanding of time in the seventeenth century. Additionally, the Roman Catholic Church recognized Aristotle's concepts about space and time as normative until astronomical discoveries made by Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) in the sixteenth century.[33]

We may characterize the philosophical rift created by Aristotle's departure from Plato in practical terms. For Plato, temporal perception was rooted in the ordering of the cosmos by the demiurge. We perceive time to flow, as a product of change, at the grandest scale by seeing the heavens move – they move, day passes to night, season to season. Plato thus perceived time *as* motion. The notion of time *as* motion is appealing because it simplifies the mechanics of how time works. Aristotle, however, by taking the microscopic view, declares that time is *not* motion, because time is comprised of an infinite continuum of durationless 'nows.' We can count 'nows,' and the process approximates duration in time – but technically, before and after has no true durational content. Thus in Raphael's depiction of Plato and Aristotle in the *School of Athens* (1509-1511), as the two philosophers are the central figures beneath the painting's fictive barrel vault, Plato to our left raises his finger to the sky (macroscopic), while Aristotle to our right points down to the earth (microscopic) (fig. 1).[34]

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[33] Novikov, *River of Time*, 11; Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Press, 1998), 15.

[34] For an introduction to Raphael's *Stanze*, see, John Shearman, "The Vatican Stanze: Functions and Decoration," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 57 (1971): 367-472;

The conflict between Aristotle and Plato, viewed in these terms, is simple. Plato's view of time is cosmological and speculative. Aristotle's view is technical and verges on the empirical/mathematical. For Plato, time is relational to movement; for Aristotle, time exists absolutely as a series of 'nows' that approximate the geometrical form of a line. Aristotle marks the turn towards science, where our physical perceptions of how time works may not account with time understood mathematically.

Confronting this bifurcation of physical perception and science, Aristotle's greatest commentator, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD), summarizes his interpretation of the practical impetus behind Aristotle's definition of time "as the number of motion in respect of before and after." Aquinas reverts back to a more accessible explanation of how we seem to perceive time in relation to motion. In response to Aristotle's definition, Aquinas remarks: "Thus by perceiving any sort of motion we perceive time and, vice versa, when we perceive time we are simultaneously perceiving a motion."[35]

We arrive where we began – our senses tell us that we perceive time and motion together, even if this contradicts Aristotle's notion of the durationless now. Before

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Ernst Gombrich, "Raphael's *Stanze della Segnatura* and the Nature of its Symbolism," in *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1972), 85-101; Ingrid D. Rowland, "The Vatican Stanze," *The Cambridge Companion to Raphael*, ed. Marcia B. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95-119.

[35] Thomas Aquinas, *Corpus Thomisticum: Opera Omnia*, (Rome: Editio Leonina II, 1884), 202. The Greek form of Aristotle's definition of time that Aquinas worked from is found in Aquinas' *Commentaria*: "ὅτι μὲν τοίνυν ὁ χρόνος ἀριθμός ἐστιν κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον." Aquinas' Latin translation of the Greek is, "tempus numerus motus secundum prius et posterius sit." Aquinas, *Corpus*, 208.

advancing chronologically to Isaac Newton and the seventeenth century, we must divert

ourselves briefly in a lateral, but essential direction. While Newton took Aristotle's

presaging of the absolute quality of time to its apogee, St. Augustine (354-430) takes us

into the internal experience of time as a psychological phenomenon nearly independent of

the external world, where the soul can entertain past, present, and future simultaneously.

1.4 St. Augustine: Time as Distention of the Soul

St. Augustine (354-430 AD), following in the wake of the respective

philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle, articulates a novel approach to discussing

and understanding the nature of time that is independent of the concerns of natural

philosophy. Displaying both continuity, and significant discontinuity, simultaneously,

with Plato and Aristotle, Augustine proposed a theory on the nature of time that is

predicated upon time as a psychological state or reality perceived in the mind's eye of the

soul. Writing his seminal text that addresses time, the *Confessions* (397-400 AD),

Augustine brings a distinctly Christian perspective to the question of time.[36]

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[36] For a select survey of time in Augustine's *Confessions*, see, Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of the Soul* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions: Text and Commentary*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Alvin Plantinga, "Augustinian Christian Philosophy," *Monist* 75:3 (1992): 291-320; Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Marinus B. Pranger, "Time and Narrative in Augustine's 'Confessions'," *The Journal of Religion* 81:3 (Jul., 2001): 377-393; David van Dusen, *The Space of Time: A Sensualist Interpretation of Time in Augustine, Confessions X to XII* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

1.4.1 Rejection of Eternal Recurrence

Augustine's starting point is the rejection of cyclical or recurrent time espoused

by many Greek philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle that propose time repeats

itself throughout history *ad infinitum* – known as eternal recurrence.[37] This means that no

single event in human history is unique, but is susceptible to repetition, and that time

itself will have no end. Unlike the Greeks who, in general, posit that matter is eternal and

uncreated – the Judeo-Christian creation narrative radically proposes that the cosmos *and*

everything in it was created by God *ex nihilo* – from nothing (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1-3; Heb.

11:3, e.g.). Furthermore, Christian doctrine also proposes that time will meet its end at

the Second Coming of Christ.[38]

Christian time is at once circular, teleological and soteriological, rather than

merely linear. It is circular in the belief that time has its beginning and end in God, with

Christ as the Alpha and Omega (beginning and end) of all things (Rev. 1:8, 21:6,

22:13).[39] It is teleological in that time drives towards the Second Coming, where all will

be judged; it is soteriological in that God has acted in history steering the human race

towards this final event.[40] Thus for Augustine, the Incarnation of Christ for instance is an

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[37] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 45.

[38] Jurgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), esp. pp. 129-183.

[39] Samuel G.F. Brandon, *History, Time, and Deity: A Historical and Comparative Study of the Conception of Time in Religious Thought and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), 1.

[40] John L. Russell, S.J., "Time in Christian Thought," *The Voices of Time*, ed. Julius T. Fraser (London: Penguin, 1968), 68.

utterly unrepeatable, singular event in human history and the history of the cosmos.

Therefore in his *City of God* (early 5th c.), Augustine criticizes eternal recurrence:

> The pagan philosophers have introduced cycles of time in which the same things are in the order of nature being restored and repeated, and have asserted that these whirlings of past and future ages will go on unceasingly…[yet] it is only through the sound doctrine of rectilinear course that we can escape from I know not what false cycles discovered by false and deceitful sages.[41]

1.4.2 What is Time?

Augustine beings his exploration of time as a psychological state by asking the simple question, what is time?:

> What is time? Who can explain this easily and briefly? Who can comprehend this even in thought so as to articulate the answer in words? Yet what do we speak of, in our familiar everyday conversation, more than of time? We surely know what we mean when we speak of it. We also know what is meant when we hear someone else talking about it. What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know.[42]

Augustine states his perplexity clearly. We seem to experience time, but the matter of defining it clearly is a significant challenge. Our internal sense of past, present, and future seems *real*, but an external definition is elusive.

<u>Criticism of Motion-Based Temporality</u>

Then Augustine continues by taking on Plato's, and to an extent Aristotle's views of motion-based temporality. Augustine insists: "I have heard a learned person say that the movements of sun, moon, and stars in themselves constitute time. But I could not

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[41] Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003), 487-488. Cited from Book XII.14.

[42] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 230. From here forward, the *Confessions* will be cited as: Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.17.

agree."[43] Augustine no doubt references Plato's passage in the *Timaeus* where Plato

suggests, "…the wanderings of the five planets…do constitute time."[44] And to provide

proof that the movement of celestial bodies cannot constitute time, Augustine continues:

"Let no one tell me then that time is the movement of heavenly bodies. At a man's

prayer the sun stood still, so that a battle could be carried through to victory

(Josh. 10:12): the sun stopped but time went on."[45] Augustine references the biblical

account of Joshua defending the city of Gibeon from the Amorites, entreating God to stop

the sun so that the day might be extended for continued battle, and victory (Josh. 10:12-

14). Joshua's request was granted, the sun stopped, but according to Augustine's

reasoning, time must have continued to elapse during the battle. Thus motion of the

heavenly bodies cannot constitute time.[46]

What Augustine is driving towards is the inexorable conundrum of decoupling

time from movement. Yet, his thought process is nonetheless encompassed by the two

variables. It is within the internal logic of arguing that time cannot be movement that

Augustine begins to arrive at his psychological view of time. But it is important to

understand in greater detail *why* he cannot accept time as the product of motion beyond

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[43] Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.29.

[44] Plato, *Timaeus*, 39 c-d.

[45] Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.30.

[46] The pagan philosopher Plotinus (c.204-270) of the Platonic tradition, who heavily
influenced Augustine's thought, also comments: "If, then, time is not the movement of
the sphere, it can hardly be the sphere itself, which was supposed to be time because it is
in motion." Plotinus, *Ennead*, 3.7.8.8-19; in Plotinus, *Ennead*, vol. III, trans. A.H.
Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 323. Plotinus will also
henceforth be cited in short form.

his scriptural reference. It is clear that Augustine finds something compelling about the notion that motion produces time:

> Do you command me to concur if someone says time is the movement of a physical entity? You do not. For I learn that no body can be moved except in time. You tell me so, but I do not learn that actual movement of a body constitutes time…For when a body is moved, it is by time that I measure duration of the movement, from the moment it begins until it ends. Unless I have observed the point when it begins…I am unable to measure it….[47]

Augustine's preliminary conclusion is that although the movement of bodies allows duration to be measured, one must be able to observe the point of which the body was moved, and ultimately comes to rest. From Augustine's perspective, only God is capable of this in the final analysis, because God is the mover of all things, and exists outside of temporal restraint. It is in fact this conundrum that motivates Augustine to propose his psychological view of time. Where Augustine does agree with Plato and Aristotle is that *change* is a necessary component of time.[48]

1.4.3 Time as Distension of the Soul

Augustine's insistence on time as a function of the mind or soul provides him with the capacity to relate profane time to sacred time, where human time becomes an essential component of the Christian narrative of salvation.[49] Augustine proceeds by expounding upon his theory by stating:

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[47] Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.31.

[48] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 46; Turetzky, *Time*, 63.

[49] Turetzky, *Time*, 62.

Perhaps it would be exact to say: there are three times, a present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things to come. In the soul there are these three aspects of time…The present considering the past is memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is expectation.[50]

By suggesting that time is a mental state where past, present, and future can be contemplated individually, and perhaps simultaneously, removes the discussion from the parameters of motion-based temporality and internalizes it. Augustine does not conceive of time as being imaginary, but rather the human experience of time being in sharp contrast to the eternality of God. The soul is competent to observe the past, present, and future, although the past and future do not exist *as such*.[51] Simply put, when the soul understands that the past and future do exist, it draws both poles into the present. This is particularly important along soteriological lines. As an example: the Incarnation happened (past), it is experienced mystically in the Eucharist of the liturgy (present), and is received in memorial and anticipation of Christ's return in at the Second Coming (future). Within the interplay of teleology and soteriology, we may best understand Augustine's conclusion: "That is why I have come to think that time is simply a distension…So it is in you, my mind, that I measure periods of time…Then shall I find stability and solidity in you, in your truth which imparts form to me."[52]

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[50] Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.26.

[51] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 46.

[52] First clause of quote: Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.26; second clause of quote, Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.36; third clause of quote, Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.40. Plotinus' influence is also echoed in Augustine's heartfelt exposition: "So the spreading out of life involves time; life's continual progress involves continuity of time, and life which is past involves past time…Yes, for if eternity is life at rest, unchanging and

The internalization of Augustine's time generates powerful, evocative

possibilities when one relates past, present, and future events to the history and future

promises of the narrative of Christian salvation in Christ. Making the past and future

present, in the present, is an essential feature of Christian teleology and liturgical

practice, and will be explored in the following chapters. We may summarize Augustine's

contribution of psychological time by concluding that far from being outside the

framework of motion-based temporal perception, his psychological proposition of

distension springs out of the internal difficulties of relating time to motion

philosophically (and in his case, theologically). Augustine affirms that he measures time

by the duration of movement, but finds the motion of physical bodies to be inadequate in

defining time. Time for Augustine is more than bodies in motion – it is a sacrament that

bifurcates God's eternality with the human, passable, experience of salvation's march

towards the eschaton.

1.5 Renaissance Interlude: Clocks, Petrarch & *The Triumph of the Cross*

The early modern period enjoyed little advancement in the philosophy of time.

From antiquity to Isaac Newton's theorization of absolute time in the seventeenth

century, Aristotelianism remained the predominant theory on the philosophy of time.[53]

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identical and already unbounded…time must exist as an image of eternity…." Plotinus, *Ennead*, 3.7.11.41.

[53] See Paul F. Grendler, "Continuity and Change in Italian Universities Between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," *Renaissance Medievalisms*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009), 33-52; Michael Edwards, "Medieval Philosophy in the Late Renaissance: The Case of Internal and External Time in Scotist Metaphysics," *Renaissance Medievalisms*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009), 229-248;

Neoplatonism gained increased interest predominately through the efforts of Marsilio

Ficino (1433-1499), the great translator and commentator of Plato's works, and Cardinal

Nicholas of Cusa's (1401-1464) treatise, *De docta Ignorantia* (c. 1440) that examines

time and infinity through the mystical lens of Christianity. Giordano Bruno (1548-1600)

proposed a controversial notion of infinity and infinite worlds in *De l'Infinito* (1584) and

De Immenso et Innumerabilibus (1591) that ultimately led to his condemnation and

execution in 1600. Additionally, Galileo Galilei's scientific advancements contributed to

the collapse of the geocentric cosmological model.[54] Despite these important

contributions to intellectual history, Aristotle's convention of "time as the number of

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Dirk-Jan Dekker, "John the Canon on Time and Motion: A Case Study in Aristotelian Natural Philosophy and Early Scotism," *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Cees Leijenhorst, Cristoph Lüthy, and Johannes M.M.H. Thijssen (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 225-248; David A Lines. "University Natural Philosophy in Renaissance Italy: The Decline of Aristotelianism?," *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Cees Leijenhorst, Cristoph Lüthy, and Johannes M.M.H. Thijssen (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 325-342; Charles Lohr, "The Social Situation of the Study of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Cees Leijenhorst, Cristoph Lüthy, and Johannes M.M.H. Thijssen (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 343-348.

[54] For an introduction to philosophy in the Renaissance, see, Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanistic Strains* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955); Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Philosophy and the Medieval Tradition* (Latrobe, PA: Archabbey Press, 1966); Charles Trinkaus, *Renaissance Transformations of Late Medieval Thought* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). For Marsilio Ficino: Marsilio Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1962); Michael J.B. Allen and Valery Ress, eds. *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leidein: Brill, 2002); for discussions of Nicholas of Cusa, Giordano Bruno, and Galileo Galilei in relation to time, see, John Spencer Hill, *Infinity, Faith, and Time: Christian Humanism and Renaissance Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997) esp. pp. 13-27.

movement" remained the authoritative formulation of the relation of time and movement in the philosophy of time.

Rather than robust contributions to the philosophy of time, the Renaissance experienced at once the refinement of the mechanical clock, as well as literary and theological expressions of temporal perception inherited from antiquity and the medieval tradition.[55] The refinement of the mechanical clock, and its growing presence in European cities upon public buildings, contributed towards a growing trend of conceptualizing time as comprised of discreet units, rather than dependent upon solar movement and the sacred time of feast days. In literature, Petrarch's *Trionfo del Tempo* (*Triumph of Time*) (c. 1340-1374) describes the ravaging effects time's passage, primarily in relation to aspects of change and decay. In theology, Girolamo Savonarola's *Triumph of the Cross* (1497) utilizes Aristotelian philosophy in his defense of the Christian faith. The case studies of the clock, Petrarch, and Savonarola thus serve as representative examples of Renaissance temporality - a transitional period, or interlude, between antiquity and the Newtonian revolution.

1.5.1 The Mechanical Clock

Prior to the advent of the mechanical clock, the primary means of keeping time were water clocks, known as *clepsydra* to the Greeks, and the sundial.[56] While the water

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[55] For an excellent study of time and temporality in Renaissance art, including depictions of the zodiac, personifications of time and Petrarch's *Trionfo del Tempo*, see, Simona Cohen, *Transformations of Time and Temporality in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

[56] Whitrow, *Time in History*, 26. For a survey of clock technology and the mechanical clock, see, Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (London: Routledge & Kegan

clock relied upon a continuous process, like water dripping through an orifice, the

mechanical clock functions by continually repeating itself, thus dividing time into

uniform, discrete segments.[57] The sundial, not unlike water clocks, also relies upon the

continual movement of the sun to cast a shadow upon the dial, thus indicating the time.

The fundamental distinction between the mechanical clock versus water clocks and the

sundial is the mechanical clock does not rely upon continuous movement to indicate the

passage of time, but rather discreet mechanical repetitions.

The date of the invention of the first mechanical clock is unknown, but usually

dated the late thirteenth century.[58] According to Gerald Whitrow, clocks likely developed

in monasteries, motivated by the need to keep the canonical hours of prayer punctually,

which previously relied upon solar movement.[59] Several of the earliest clocks produced

in Europe include the clock for the Abbey of St. Albans (c. 1328), England, and the clock

on the campanile of Sant'Eustorgio (c. 1309), Milan – which is perhaps the first public

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Paul, 1934); H. Alan Loyd, "Mechanical Time Keepers," *A History of Technology*, vol. III, ed. Charles Singer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 648-675; Lynn White Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 119-129; Carlo M. Cipolla, *Clocks and Culture, 1300-1700* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977); Jacques LeGoff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Age*s, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), esp. 29-42; Rachel Doggett, Susan Jaskot and Robert Rand, eds. *Time, the Greatest Innovator: Timekeeping and Time Consciousness in Early Modern Europe* (Washington D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1986), esp. Silvio A. Bedini, "The Map of Time," 11-23; Cohen, *Transformations*, 49-52.

[57] Whitrow, *Time in History*, 99.

[58] Cohen, *Transformations*, 51.

[59] Whitrow, *Time in History*, 102.

Italian clock.[60] The development of clocks and their public display began in towns,

fostered by the rise of mercantile economies, as opposed to the landed, seasonal cycles of

agricultural life. Beyond marking the canonical hours and important feast days of the

Church, time keeping became related to commercial ventures, money, and an increased

pace of life in the city. Lewis Mumford summarizes the nascent societal transition from

agrarian to cosmopolitan by asserting that time-keeping passed into time-accounting and

time-rationing, where eternity gradually ceased to be the measure of human actions.[61]

The advent and incorporation of the mechanical clock into cosmopolitan

European society does present a practice of time keeping based upon discreet, uniform

units of time, independent of seeing the shadow of time move across a sundial, or grains

of sand passing through an hourglass. Yet, the case should not be overstated. Mechanical

clocks were expensive, public, and therefore not utilized in the home or places of

business. The mechanical clock's greatest impact may have been aural, with the regular

sounding of bells at the passage of each hour.[62] As Gerald Whitrow notes, the English

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[60] Ibid., 107-108. For a list of the earliest mechanical clocks, see Cipolla, *Clocks and Culture*, 40-47.

[61] Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 14. Cited from Whitrow, *Time in History*, 110.

[62] For sound in the Renaissance, see, Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice: Architecture, Music, Acoustics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Niall Atkinson, "The Republic of Sound: Listening to Florence at the Threshold of the Renaissance," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 16:1/2 (September, 2013), 57-84; Niall Atkinson, *The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016).

word 'clock' is etymologically linked to the medieval Latin *clocca*, meaning bell.[63] While

the advent of the mechanical clock presages a modern perception of time kept by marking

the passage of discrete, uniform units; the predominate experience of time in the

Renaissance in relation to time-keeping remained rooted in traditional means, such as the

sundial, hourglass, and Ecclesiastical calendar.[64]

1.5.2 Petrarch's *Trionfo del Tempo*

Keeping time denotes change – time's passage from one moment to the next as

the present quickly gives way to past and future. Plato understood change to be the

distinctive factor between ideal form and its material manifestation – between eternal

immovability and its moving image. Aristotle recognized change to be akin to number,

where the sequence of numbers (durationless 'nows') in the process of enumeration

approximates duration. And for Augustine, the human experience of time is internal,

where the nomenclature of temporal change occurs in psychological distension. With the

great Italian poet Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) (anglicized Petrarch), we see the

procession of time examined through the fleeting nature of fame, and the brevity of

human life. In the *Trionfo del Tempo*, time is the great destroyer of men and all mortal

things.[65]

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[63] Whitrow, *Time in History*, 102.

[64] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 39.

[65] Cohen, *Transformations*, 120. My discussion of Petrarch's *Trionfo del Tempo* follows
Simona Cohen's excellent analysis of Petrarch's text and its illustrations.

Themes of the *Trionfo del Tempo*: Time, Movement, Destruction

The *Trionfo del Tempo* is the fifth of six *Trionfi*, directly following the *Trionfo della Fama*, and is therefore not an independent work.[66] The final book, *Trionfo dell'Eternità,* describes how God in eternity will vanquish the effects of time. Petrarch opens his *Trionfo del Tempo* with *Sol* (the sun) rising in his winged quadriga racing through the sky in his infinite cycle of night and day. Ruminating on the vanity of human aspiration in contrast to Sol's unending path, Petrarch remarks, "how swiftly time before my eyes rush on after the guiding sun that never rests."[67] The author laments that life is brief: "This morning I was a child and now I am old."[68] Petrarch admonishes men in the false hope of lasting glory, and warns that time dissolves all mortal things, both physical and mental. Time ultimately triumphs over the world and worldly fame.[69]

Time is the destroyer of fame, and time's personified passage is depicted in innumerable graphic illustrations to the text from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (fig. 2). Describing cumulative themes in the *Trionfo del Tempo* illustrations, Simona Cohen eloquently summarizes:

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[66] *Trionfo dell'Amore*, *Trionfo della Castità*, *Trionfo della Morte*, *Trionfo della Fama*, *Trionfo del Tempo*, *Trionfo dell'Eternità*.

[67] "Io vidi il tempo andar leggero dopo la guida sua che mai non posa." From, Ernest H Wilkins, *The Triumphs of Petrarch* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 95; Cohen, *Transformations*, 120.

[68] "stamani ero un fanciullo ed or sono vecchio." Wilkins, *Triumphs*, 95-96.

[69] Cohen, *Transformations*, 120.

Time walks and flies but never stands still. Eternity, by contrast, appears as the three parts of time combined [past, present, future], immobile and unchangeable. The end of time is described as the immobility of the heavenly bodies…and the unification of all time's parts into one. Time, the destroyer, would die together with Death…All hope and beauty awaited man above the temporal world, in heaven.[70]

Time's racing quadriga thus symbolizes the ravaging consequences of time's passage that stand in odds with the immobility and unchangeability of God and the eternal realm of heaven. Time, movement, and changeability are interrelated for Petrarch and echo the cosmological understanding of time found in Plato's *Timaeus*. The *Trionfo del Tempo* thus literarily distills the implications of time's movement in relation to the human state, and serves as a warning against vain pursuits in the face of fleeting mortality.

1.5.3 Savonarola and *The Triumph of the Cross*

From the cosmological perspective Petrarch presents in the *Trionfo del Tempo* where time's movement in his quadriga represents changeability and corruptibility of all things, we draw back to an Aristotelian axiom which manifests itself in Girolamo Savonarola's (1452-1498) theological apology of Christianity, *The Triumph of the Cross* (1497).[71] Published in Latin and Italian in Florence, 1497, Savonarola's *The Triumph of the Cross* was his most popular work and was likely known to Michelangelo. The artist's authorized biography written by Ascanio Condivi (1553) records that not only did Michelangelo read the Holy Scriptures, but he also read "…the writings of those who

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[70] Ibid., 120.

[71] For an extensive bibliography of Savonarola studies, see Chapter 2 of the dissertation, ftnt. 23.

have busied themselves with their study, such as Savonarola for whom he has always had a strong affection, and the memory of whose living voice he still carries in his mind."[72]

<u>God as Prime Mover</u>

The Triumph of the Cross was meant to reach a wide readership beyond clergyman, therefore indicating that the arguments therein might have been accessible to educated Florentine men, if not already a part of their broader intellectual vocabulary.[73] In Chapter Six of *The Triumph of the Cross*, Savonarola moves to prove the existence of God through the method of logic. Beginning with a definition of God, Savonarola continues:

> Some call this Highest Being the Prime Mover of all things; others call it the First Cause and Principle, or the Highest Good and Supreme Truth. But, whatsoever God may be called, if His name expresses the highest and superexcellent nature, His existence must be acknowledged. This is admitted even by the philosophers.[74]

Savonarola mentions several options of how one might refer to God, demonstrating his knowledge of classical philosophy, including Plato (Highest Good and Supreme Truth), and most notably, Aristotle (Prime Mover, First Cause and Principle). Aristotle's axiom of the Prime Mover emerges most clearly in his *Metaphysics*. In considering what principle or substance might be capable of bringing all things into being (i.e. motion and therefore changeability), Aristotle concludes: "And since that which is

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[72] From Ascanio Condivi's *Life of Michelangelo* (1553) in, George Bull, *Michelangelo: Life, Letters, and Poetry*, trans. George Bull (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 68.

[73] For an introduction to Savonarola's *The Triumph of the Cross*, including its religious and social context, see, Girolamo Savonarola, *The Triumph of the Cross*, trans. John Procter (London: Sands & Co., 1901), v-xxv.

[74] Savonarola, *Triumph of the Cross*, 17.

moved and which also moves is an intermediate, it follows that there must be something

that moves without being moved. This will be eternal…and it will be activation."[75]

Further in Book *Lambda*, Aristotle reiterates, "…necessarily, what is moved is moved by

something… and the prime mover must be intrinsically unmoved."[76]

What Aristotle strikes at is the necessity for there to be a being, which he terms

the Prime Mover, which is capable of moving all things while remaining unmoved itself.

This is the fundamental principle that Savonarola draws upon in his exposition in Chapter

Six in his defense of God's existence in *The Triumph of the Cross*. Savonarola insists:

> Philosophers have proved, most effectually, that everything that moves is moved
> by something else…And since every movement under the heavens depends on the
> movement of the heavens, there must be some substance that moves the
> heavens…If it does not move, it must be God, who moves all things, but is
> Himself immovable…If we continue this chain of argument, we shall see that
> there must either by one First Mover, or else an infinite series of movements with
> no First Mover. The second hypothesis is philosophically absurd…There must,
> then, be one supreme Mover, whom we call God.[77]

Savonarola's argument for the existence of God, intended for a broad audience,

relies directly on Aristotle's proofs for a Prime Mover – a being or substance capable of

bringing all things, including the heavens, into motion, without being moved itself. For

Savonarola, the Prime Mover is specifically the Christian God. Savonarola's exposition is

a rather astonishing appropriation of Aristotle's thinking directed towards Christian

philosophical principles. Time as the product of movement and change finds its source in

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[75] Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 2004), 373. Quotation from Book *Lambda*.7.

[76] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 377. Citation from Book *Lambda*.8.

[77] Savonarola, *Triumph of the Cross*, 17-18.

the being that moves others but is not moved. Savonarola's inclusion of Aristotle's Prime

Mover illustrates how deeply the antique philosophical theory of time and movement

penetrated theological discourse in the Renaissance.

1.5.4 Renaissance Interlude: Synthesis

Although the Renaissance did not produce original perspectives on the philosophy

of time, notions of change, corruptibility, and the transience of mortality manifest clearly

in Petrarch's *Trionfo del Tempo*, where time ravages all things physical and mental.

Savonarola's utilization of Aristotle's Prime Mover to prove the existence of God within

a Christian context, reiterates the fundamental influence of classical philosophy in

Renaissance vernacular cosmology. And with the increasing role of mechanical clocks in

the public sphere, consistent and measurable units of time became achievable, although

perhaps not predominate in the everyday operations of the average citizen, who continued

to rely upon more traditional means of time measurement, such as the sunrise and sunset,

the sundial, and the hourglass. During the Renaissance, time, and its passage, implicated

manifold considerations such as movement of the heavens, changeability, and transience.

This perhaps explains why Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini's (1551-1610) tomb depicts a

skeleton as a personification of death, holding a shattered winged-hourglass. Time has

run out, as its flight mirrors the flight of the Cardinal's soul from his body (figs. 3-4).[78]

By the seventeenth century, however, Isaac Newton's formulation of absolute time would

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[78] See Anthony Bloom, *Guide to Baroque Rome* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 138;
David L. Bershad, "The Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini Tomb in S. Pietro in Vincoli,"
Antologia de Belle Arti 7/8 (1978): 323-325.

mark a distinct break in temporal perception, setting the stage for a modern understanding

of time.

1.6 Newton: Time as Absolute

In 1687, Isaac Newton published his landmark work, *Philosophiae Naturalis*

Principia Mathematica (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy), which is widely

considered the most important work ever published in the physical sciences.[79] Rather

than being primarily motivated by proposing a new philosophy of time, Newton was

more interested in the nature of physical motion, not unlike Aristotle. Newton

acknowledges two views of time in his *Principia*: subjective time and mathematical time.

Newton describes both views of time, and squarely asserts that mathematical time is true

time, and subjective time is unreliable and open to deception. Newton's articulate

distinction between subjective and mathematical time swiftly condemns all previous

models of the philosophy of time to retrograde status:

> Although time, space, place, and motion are very familiar to everyone, it must be
> noted that these quantities are popularly conceived solely with reference to the
> objects of sense perception. And this is the source of certain preconceptions; to
> eliminate them it is useful to distinguish these quantities as absolute and relative,
> true and apparent, mathematical and common.[80]

The false preconceptions Newton infers are methods of perceiving time relative to

our senses – including motion as an indicator of duration (i.e. the movement of a body

from point *a* to *b* indicates that time elapses in the process). Newton is driving towards an

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[79] Hawking, *Brief History of Time*, 4-5; Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 65.

[80] Isaac Newton, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, trans.
Ierome Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman (Berkeley: University of California Press,
1999), 408.

absolute view of time where our senses play no role in defining or perceiving the true

nature of time. Newton's absolute view of time inserts a devastating wedge between his

proposal of mathematical time, and all previous views of time that preceded the

Principia. Newton's definition of time thus represents a decisive sea change in temporal

perception, ushering in the modern view of time.

1.6.1 Newton's Definition of Absolute Time

Newton defines absolute time clearly and succinctly, with an economy of means

paralleling mathematical formulae:

> Absolute, true, and mathematical time, in and of itself and of its own nature,
> without reference to anything external, flows uniformly and by another name is
> called duration. Relative, apparent, and common time is any sensible and external
> measure (precise or imprecise) of duration by means of motion; such a measure –
> for example, an hour, a day, a month, a year – is commonly used instead of true
> time.[81]

In proposing an absolute view of time, Newton maintained that time was completely

segregated from space and motion, positing that time possessed its own singular nature.

Instead of viewing time like all his predecessors where time was a *part* or *consequence* of

the physical world (i.e. the movement of the planets), Newton asserts that the physical

world is *embedded* in time.[82]

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[81] Newton, *Principia Mathematica*, 408.

[82] Hawking, *Brief History of Time*, 18. See also, Lawrence W. Fagg, *The Becoming of Time: Integrating Physical and Religious Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 24.

Death Knell to Time and Movement

The historical aspects of the philosophy of time we have traced thus far perish beneath the weight of Newton's novel axiom. Duration is independent of any external variable, and flows uniformly, unaffected by any external phenomenon – a notion that would have perplexed Plato, for instance, in his definition of time as the moving image of eternity in the *Timaeus*. By decoupling any consideration of time being inextricably linked to movement, Newton presents a vision of time that is an unlimited, enumerated axis on which the cosmos proceeds. Time is an axis, like points on a line, where events unfold.[83]

As time flows "uniformly" without reference to anything external, time is thus unaffected by events that occur on its axis. Time therefore is always identical at any given point in the universe, just as any point along a geometric axis.[84] This creates serious problems for Augustine and the uniqueness he attributes to the biblical figure of Joshua on the day the sun stood still (Josh. 10:12-14) in his *Confessions*. And as time flows at a steady rate, the heavens would have no hope of accelerating days, months, and years, if their revolutions were to increase in velocity. As Newton affirms, "All motions can be accelerated or retarded, but the flow of absolute time cannot be changed."[85]

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[83] Peter Coveney and Roger Highfield, *The Arrow of Time: A Voyage Through Science to Solve Time's Greatest Mystery* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1992), 62.

[84] Turetzky, *Time*, 74.

[85] Newton, *Principia Mathematica*, 410.

The only connection between Newton and his predecessors that he did not sever is the role of God in temporal reality. Although Newton discards the Aristotelian notion of the Prime Mover, he nonetheless believed that the steady flow of time is an "eminent effect of God," and therefore uncreated.[86] A Christian, and strongly influenced by his theology, it seems that Newton's absolute view of God informed his theories of absolute time and space.[87]

1.6.2 Paradigm Shift

Within a short time after Newton published his theory of time in the *Principia*, the concept of absolute time held considerable sway in the minds of most modern individuals.[88] Even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, nearly a century after Albert Einstein's rejection of absolute space and time, the Newtonian theory of time is in many ways the fundamental view of time held by most modern individuals.[89] Time as absolute, flowing indiscriminately and uniformly along a geometrical axis, unhindered by external considerations, is reduced to an ontological simplicity – a conceptual monad that no longer evokes the creative energy of a Demiurge, or the logical necessity of a Prime Mover.

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[86] Isaac Newton, *Unpublished Scientific Papers of Isaac Newton: A Selection from the Portsmouth Collection in the University Library, Cambridge*, eds. Alfred Rupert Hall and Marie Boas Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 132.

[87] Hawking, *Brief History of Time*, 18.

[88] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 67.

[89] Ibid., 67; Novikov, *River of Time*, 31.

In the daily affairs of a modern individual, time is something to be managed, counted, and not wasted - a substance vacated of cosmological and theological content - indiscriminately marching on to the beat of its own, unstoppable drum. The 'common time' of our sense perception where we measure duration by means of motion, Newton asserts, is not to be trusted. That the perception of movement has the capacity to muddle or deceive is a sentiment expressed by subsequent Enlightenment intellectuals, lodging itself into eighteenth century art theory with interesting, long lasting effects.

1.7 Beyond Newton: Enlightenment Art Theory & *Punctum Temporis*

In his essay, "Moment and Movement in Art," Ernst Gombrich opens his inquiry by addressing what he deems to be a lacuna in art historical thinking: "While the problem of space and its representation in art has occupied the attention of art historians to an almost exaggerated degree, the corresponding problem of time and the representation of movement has been strangely neglected."[90] Gombrich locates the genesis of this contemporary predisposition to the art theory of the Enlightenment, beginning with Lord Shaftesbury's (1671-1713) *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711). What Gombrich does not mention, however, is the influence Isaac Newton's definition of absolute time may have exercised over art theorists in Newton's era. Newton's decoupling of time from movement seems to deeply resonate with what art theorists like Shaftesbury, James Harris (1709-1780), and Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781), who insist

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[90] Ernst H. Gombrich, "Moment and Movement in Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964): 293.

that painting (and by extension, sculpture) should confine itself to a single moment in time, unencumbered by the durational potential of movement.

Newton's distinction between "true," mathematical time, and "common" time is crucial to the ensuing discussion. True, absolute time, flows uniformly *without reference to anything external*: relative or common time is any *sensible* and external *measure of duration by means of motion*.[91] If we are to not trust our "common" perception of the measure of duration by means of motion (i.e., we know time is elapsing by witnessing movement), then we are bound to conceptualize insinuated movement in a painting or sculpture as belonging to a single instant, without reference to anything "external" to it (movement).

1.7.1 Lord Shaftesbury: The 'Single Instant'

In considering the ways in which a painter may approach representing The Judgment of Hercules, Lord Shaftesbury tutors the painter in the parameters of his task:

> 'Tis evident that every Master in Painting, when he has made choice of the determinate Date or Point of Time, according to which he wou'd represent his History, is afterwards debar'd the taking advantage from any other Action than what is immediately present, and belonging to that *single Instant* he describes: for if he passes the present only for a moment, he may as well pass it for many years; and by this reckoning he may with as good right repeat the same Figure several times over…There remains no other way by which we can possibly give a hint of any thing future, or call to mind any thing past, than by setting in view such Passages or Events as have actually subsisted, or according to Nature might well subsist, or happen together in *one and the same instant*.[92]

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[91] Italics mine. Newton, *Principia Mathematica*, 408.

[92] Italics mine. Anthony Earl of Shaftesbury, *An Essay on Painting: Being a Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules* (London: John Darby, 1714), 9-10. For an analysis of Shaftesbury's theory of art, see, Dabney Townsend, "Shaftesbury's Aesthetic Theory," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41 (1982): 205-213; Livio Pestilli, "Ut Pictura Non Poesis: Lord Shaftesbury's "Ridiculous

Shaftesbury's admonition is clear: depicted action must be contained to a *single instant*, or to *one and the same instant*. Shaftesbury later admits that his edict for instantaneous action is often violated, but nonetheless encourages the wise painter to eliminate any trace of duration, or continuous narrative – where the same figure is repeated "several times over" within the same visual field.[93]

1.7.2 James Harris: The *Punctum Temporis*

Lord Shaftesbury's recommendation that painting limit itself to a single instant in time likely influenced his nephew, James Harris, in his *Three Treatises: Discourse on Music, Painting and Poetry* (1744), where Harris described with surgical clarity what every picture should limit itself to – a *punctum temporis*, or point of time.[94] Suggesting that painting's primary arena for excellence consists of figure and color, whereas music's province is motion and sound, Harris continues by asserting, "For of *necessity* every

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Anticipation of Metamorphosis" and the Two Versions of "Diana and Actaeon" by Paolo de Matteis," *Artibus et Historiae* 14:27 (1993): 131-139; Richard Checketts, "Shaftesbury's Theory of Art: Substance and Virtue," *Oxford Art Journal* 37:1 (2014): 83-98.

[93] See, Gombrich, "Moment and Movement," 293-294. For an excellent analysis of continuous narrative in Renaissance art, see Lew Andrews, *Story and Space in Renaissance Art: The Rebirth of Continuous Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. pp. 77-94.

[94] Gombrich, "Moment and Movement," 294. For an examination of James Harris' theory of art, see, James Malek, "Art as Mind Shaped by Medium: The Significance of James Harris' "A Discourse on Music, Painting and Poetry" in Eighteenth Century Aesthetics," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 12:2 (Summer, 1970): 231-239; Clive T. Probyn, *The Sociable Humanist: The Life and Works of James Harris, 1709-1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Picture is a *Punctum Temporis* or Instant."[95] Harris seems to realize that if a picture

should only represent a point of time, the viewer must supply additional knowledge

external to the picture to in order to apprehend the full spectrum of the painting's

meaning:

> For Painting is not bounded in Extension, as it is in Duration…The Reason is, that
> a Picture, being but a *Point* or *Instant*, in a Story well known the Spectator's
> Memory will supply the *previous* and the *subsequent*. But this cannot be done
> where such knowledge is wanting.[96]

Interestingly, Harris makes a distinction between *extension* and *duration*.

Extension from Harris' perspective must occur in the spectator's memory, "extending" as

such the "previous" and "subsequent" of what is depicted, through the spectator's

knowledge of the subject and its narrative content. Duration is a quality Harris associates

with music, not painting, given that musical notes occur in succession through time.

Succession in music means motion for Harris. The *punctum temporis* relates directly, and

one suspects intentionally, to Newton's philosophy of absolute time plotted like points on

an infinite axis, passing uniformly and constantly without reference to anything external,

especially motion. Perceiving depicted movement in a painting as an instrument of

duration would fall into Newton's category of "common" time, which is unreliable, and

ultimately violates "true," mathematical time. Harris' decoupling of movement as an

indication of duration adheres to the Newtonian physics of his era.

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[95] James Harris, *Three Treatises: The First Concerning Art. The Second Concerning Music, Painting, and Poetry. The Third Concerning Happiness* (London: H. Woodfall, 1744), 63.

[96] Harris, *Three Treatises*, 64-65.

1.7.3 Gotthold Lessing: Culmination of the Enlightenment Legacy

The preceding ideas were appropriated by Gotthold Lessing and incorporated into his comparatively more influential *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766).[97] Within the context of Lessing's comparison between Virgil's literary Laocoön and its marble counterpart in sculpture, Lessing proclaims:

> If the artist can never make use of more than a single moment in ever-changing nature, and if the painter in particular can us this moment only with reference to a single vantage point, while the works of both painter and sculptor are created not merely to be given glance but to be contemplated – contemplated repeatedly and at length – then it is evident that this single moment and the point from which it is viewed cannot be chosen with too great a regard for its effect. But only that which gives free reign to the imagination is effective.[98]

Lessing thus brings Shaftesbury's and Harris' theorizations to maturity. In "ever-changing nature" – change being a consequence of time - the painter and sculptor must select a "single moment" to depict, and the sculptor must determine a single "point" from which the work should be viewed. The Newtonian basis of the *punctum temporis* has bloomed into a well-articulated, systematic art theory. Lessing's suggestion to the painter or sculptor, like Harris, is to relegate duration to the imagination of the spectator. The "time" of the work must be singular. The imagination of the viewer to fill in the before

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[97] Gombrich, "Moment and Movement," 294-295. The secondary literature on Lessing's *Laocoön* is relatively extensive. For introductory material, see, William J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 95-115; Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art: From Winckelmann to Baudelaire*, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2000), 149-164; David E. Wellbery, *Lessing's Laocoon: Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[98] Gotthold E. Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Edward Allen McCormick (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1962), 19.

and after must be learned and unconstrained. Depicting more than a single moment is an encroachment upon the beholder's imagination.

1.7.4 Lessing's Legacy

The movement of figures as an indication of temporal duration has no place in Lessing's interpretive lexicon. The Newtonian basis for the *punctum temporis*, and its application in art, is bound to contemporary perceptions of time that are unmoored from external consideration, including movement and cosmological origins of the nature of time itself. While Lessing's admonitions may seem less than compelling, he perhaps is nonetheless thinking within the same vein as many modern individuals. We may not see the fish bowl so radically different than he. Both Lessing and us exist in a post-Newtonian world where the consequences of Newton's physics still loom large.

How might the Newtonian-Lessing legacy obstruct our interpretation of Michelangelo's art? How might it elicit a reconsideration of the movement of Michelangelo's figures as a means of suggesting temporal duration? Lew Andrews states:

> Instantaneous effects were not the goal of Renaissance artists. We commit a serious error if we look at quattrocento paintings (or art of many other centuries) with post-Lessing eyes…if we assume that time is either irrelevant or fully arrested…simply to stop time – to show an event as it would appear at a particular moment.[99]

To recover an historical perspective of time perception in the Renaissance, we must discover pre-Newtonian time as framed by the discussion of movement, change, and the cosmic dimension of God's role in creating and sustaining the universe. Time, before Newton, was not absolute, but "common" and related to the sense perception of motion.

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[99] Andrews, *Story and Space*, 25-26.

It stands, therefore, that such temporal considerations could prove productive when addressing pictorial and sculptural narrative in Renaissance art. Before we move to engage Michelangelo's work, we must bring our intellectual history up to the present with Albert Einstein, who represents the return to a more cosmic view of time that preceded Newton.

1.8 Einstein: Time as Relative

> "The Time Traveller was expounding a recondite matter to us…'You must follow me carefully. I shall have to controvert one or two ideas that are almost universally accepted'…*There is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it.*[100]

So begins H.G. Wells' (1866-1946) classic *The Time Machine* (1895). The discourse between the Time Traveller and his curious guests is a portentous dialogue on the eve of the twentieth century, as the Time Traveller relates time to space. Time and Space as relative variables is a matter taken up by Albert Einstein, his views of which were published just ten years later in 1905, in his groundbreaking work on Special Relativity.

The modern view of time via the lense of physics was ushered in by Albert Einstein (1879-1955), and concerns itself with the macroscopic world, in some ways representing a return to one of the most ancient concerns – the cosmological significance of time.[101] The modern physics of time is interested in expressing time utilizing the physical laws of the universe, and under Einstein's auspices, reintroduces a subjective

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[100] H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 7-8.

[101] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 68.

element into temporal understanding. Beyond these aspects, however, the modern physics understanding of time breaks ranks with previous temporal theories, and has fundamentally altered the study of time.[102]

By the early twentieth century, Einstein and others had experimentally disproven Newton's axiom of absolute time – although perhaps not in the minds of the average individual.[103] From the view of modern physics, relativistic time, which views time as a dimension akin to space, had replaced absolute time.[104] In 1905, Albert Einstein, gainfully employed as a young man at a patent office in Bern, Switzerland, delivered the first fatal blow to Newton's absolute time by publishing his paper, "Elektrodynamik bewegter Körper," in the journal *Annalen der Physik*.[105] Concerned with the movement of charged particles, Einstein swiftly demonstrated two first principles: the laws of physics must remain the same regardless of the velocity of the observer, and the speed of light is

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[102] Kurt Gödel, "A Remark about the Relationship between Relativity Theory and Idealistic Philosophy," *Albert Einstein, Philosopher-Scientist, Library of Living Philosophers*, vol. 7, ed. Paul Schilpp (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1949), 555-562. For introductory material on Einstein and time, see, Paul Davies, *About Time: Einstein's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), esp. pp. 32-33, 146-162; Rafael Ferraro, *Einstein's Space-Time: An Introduction to Special and General Relativity* (New York: Springer, 2007), esp. pp. 47-96; Michel Janssen and Christopher Lehner, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Einstein*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

[103] Hawking, *Brief History of Time*, 22.

[104] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 68.

[105] Albert Einstein, "Elektrodynamic bewegter Körper," *Annalen der Physik* 17 (1905): 891-921.

constant regardless of the motion of its source. These principles later became known as the Special Theory of Relativity.[106]

1.8.1 Spacetime

The revolution Einstein initiated is best known by the equation, $E = mc^2$ [E (energy) = m (mass) x c (speed of light)^2]. Prior to Einstein, time and space were absolute, where everything else was relative to it. With Einstein's equation, light became the absolute constant – its speed could not change. If the speed of light is constant, something else must change. While the flow of time never appears to bend in any individual frame of reference, it does bend relative to the time of another observer.[107] This concept is known as Spacetime.[108]

With the introduction of Special Relativity, time became understood as a dimension, similar to the three spatial dimensions on the Cartesian coordinate plane ($x, y,$ and z axes), in that the progression in one may affect a change in the other. Time and space generate a four-dimensional coordinate system, providing the stage for any physical phenomena.[109] The result of the Spacetime continuum is that there is no universal time. Time is considered to be relative to the velocity of the observer, and the

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[106] Roger Penrose, *The Road to Reality: A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 385-393.

[107] Estes, *Temporal Mechanics*, 68.

[108] We may note that Einstein's theory of Special Relativity did not take into account the effects of gravity, which he later incorporated into his theory of General Relativity.

[109] Helmut Hetznecker, "Nature of Time in Relativity," *Encyclopedia of Time*, vol. 1, ed. H. James Birx (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 397.

observer's position in space. Therefore time is not static, but dynamic, in that it can stretch, contract, and fluctuate relative to the observer.[110] The requisite mathematics to demonstrate the concepts of Spacetime is beyond the capacity of the mathematical laymen.

1.8.2 Time Has a Beginning: The Big Bang

In 1970, Roger Penrose and Stephen Hawking demonstrated mathematically that time does have a beginning, according to the laws of General Relativity.[111] The beginning of time and space, or the cosmos, was given the colloquial term, the "Big Bang." The scientific term assigned to the boundaries of time is *singularity*. At the Big Bang, as well as a black hole, time as well as space reach an infinite point: the value of time becomes either 0 or ∞. Time is 0 "before" the Big Bang, and time is infinite at a black hole.[112] Thus, time has a beginning. Before an infinitely dense mass of matter exploded into our expanding universe, it is thought to have existed in a single "mathematical" point, at $t =$ 0. Before the great explosion of the Big Bang and the advent of the cosmos as we know it, where did the mass come from, and why did it explode? Are we to suppose that no metaphysical entity existed before the physical existence of the cosmos? Our interrogatives are not polemical, but rather bring as back to where we began.

Viewed from the vantage point of modern physics and the Big Bang, there is exceptional logic in the ancient cosmologists' presuppositions that there must have been a

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[110] Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 123.

[111] Hawking, *Brief History of Time*, 53.

[112] Novikov, *River of Time*, 220.

Demiurge, Prime Mover, or Christ to bring all things into being and set the cosmos in motion. The theist approach to the origins of the cosmos is integral to our investigation of the duplex relation between time and movement. The three variables, historically, implicate one another. Such logic is no doubt what emboldened Savonarola's argument for a prime mover within the Christian milieu Michelangelo inhabited. For Einstein and Michelangelo, the constants of the cosmos begin with the letter *C*. For Einstein, it was light; for Michelangelo, Christ. Perhaps to Michelangelo there was no difference: "I am the light of the World." (Jn. 8:12)

1.9 Conclusion: Michelangelo Moving Time?

While there is no single authoritative perspective in the philosophy of time regarding the relation of time and movement, the question itself – how time and movement relate to another - is a central question that frames each philosopher's particular approach to discussing time. In antiquity, natural philosophy concerned itself with nature, or the physical realm, and based its theories of time upon sense perception and philosophical speculation. From Isaac Newton in the seventeenth century forward, natural philosophy became ever more mathematical, where the speculative elements of temporal theory were checked against mathematical proof. By the twentieth century, including Albert Einstein's theory of Special Relativity, not only was temporal theory mathematical, but it was also experimental – particularly Einstein's examination of charged particles, including calculating the speed of light. Einstein's theories of Special and General relativity broke from the Newtonian proposition of absolute space and time, and returned to the pre-Newtonian orientation of viewing time cosmologically. Stephen

Hawking's and Roger Penrose's mathematical postulation of the Big Bang, following Einstein, is also cosmological in demeanor.

Plato's theory of time expressed in the *Timaeus* describes time as the "moving image of eternity." Eternity, which represents perfect, unchanging form, is distinguished from the material manifestations of form, which are imperfect and subject to change. In forming the cosmos from pre-existent matter, the Demiurge set the heavens in motion, thus creating days, months, years, and therefore time. According to Plato, time was a product of cosmic movement, precipitated by the movement of the heavenly bodies, or planets. A consequence of temporal progression was change – not only of the location of heavenly bodies – but change experienced by humans and every created thing. Motion and change thus distinguish created things from the eternal, perfect unchangeability of the Demiurge.

Plato's pupil, Aristotle, challenged his master's assertion that time is produced by movement. In his *Physics*, particularly Book IV, Aristotle defines time as "the number of movement in respective of before and after." While debated, this definition likely strikes at a notion of time that involves enumeration – time is a number to be counted, and motion is the means to count it. Time as a number, passing from before to after, is akin to points on a line, where each point of time is a durationless "now." While time itself is not movement, according to Aristotle, we are able to distinguish each durationless "now" by counting, or enumerating, each "now." Counting implies succession, and succession duration. Thus the process of counting "nows" implicates the passage of time in space. Thus, while Aristotle rejects time as being a product of movement, the duplex relation

between the two variables nonetheless circumscribes his philosophical exposition into the nature of time.

With St. Augustine, we witness a "psychological swerve," where the theologian criticizes motion-based temporality, in favor of a psychological understanding of time. Augustine cites Joshua 10:12-14 from the Scriptures that describes an event where the sun stood still, but time continued to elapse. Trusting the veracity of the Scriptures, Augustine concludes that time cannot be the product of movement (in this case, like Plato, movement of the heavenly bodies). Instead, Augustine proposes that time is a distension of the mind or soul, where each individual is able to entertain past, present, and future simultaneously. Augustine's psychological or "internal" time is well suited to his Christian perspective, where the soteriological and teleological movement of humanity to the Second Coming is experienced as a remembrance of Christ's past deeds in the present, while simultaneously entertaining hope in Christ in the present, for his future return at the end of time. Time, therefore, is bounded within the person of Christ, as he is described throughout the book of Revelation as the Alpha and Omega – the beginning and end of all things, including time.

From Augustine in the early fifth century until Isaac Newton in the seventeenth century, there emerged no original perspectives on the philosophy of time that match the novelty of the propositions denoted by intellectuals from Plato through Augustine. Instead, particularly in the Renaissance, we observe the preservation of earlier models of temporal perception, where Plato and especially Aristotle, were revered as ancient pagan sages. The development of the mechanical clock introduced society to a more regular

means of marking time, compared to the less exacting methods of the sundial or hourglass. Clocks were public, and the ringing of their bells at appointed times may have had as much of an impact on broader society, as did the clock itself.

Nonetheless, from poets like Petrarch and theologians such as Savonarola, we are able to locate important themes prevalent in Renaissance society that characterize their fundamentally retrospective sense of temporal perception. For Petrarch and his *Trionfo del Tempo*, the themes of change, fleeting fame, and ultimately, bodily corruption, are realities that can only be halted and perfected by God. Time is a destroyer. Alternatively, in Savonarola's popular work, *The Triumph of the Cross*, we encounter a theologian utilizing Aristotelian principles such as the Prime Mover to demonstrate the existence of God. According to his Scholastic means of argumentation, things that move must have their ultimate origins in a mover that moves others, but is not moved himself (a philosophical solution to the problem of infinite regression). That Savonarola would marshal the Prime Mover argument in a popular theological discourse may indicate that educated men in Florence already had the basic intellectual reference point for such an argument.

In the seventeenth century, Isaac Newton's revolutionary proposition of absolute time forever changed temporal perception in intellectual history, and moved natural philosophy in a more mathematical direction. Newton decoupled time from movement, stating that true, mathematical time, flows constantly, without reference to any other variable – specifically movement. For Newton, the cosmos is "in" time, as opposed to the cosmos "producing" time. Thus Newton distinguished "common" or "relative" time from

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"true" time. Common time is based upon sense perception, and the phenomenon of seeing things move, including enumerating time according to days, months and years. This common time is unreliable, according to Newton. True time flows uniformly without reference to anything else. Newton's definition of absolute time evacuated the cosmological aspects of time indicative of previous temporal models, and set the course for the modern understanding of time perception, which in many ways still reigns supreme.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Newtonian temporal theory was shattered by Albert Einstein's theory of Special Relativity. With his equation $E = mc^2$, Einstein demonstrated that the constant term of the cosmos is the speed of light (c^2), not time. Einstein also postulated, therefore, that time is relative to space, as time assumes a dimensional aspect like the three coordinate planes (x,y,z) on a Cartesian plane. Temporal perception is therefore relative, and dependent upon one's location in space and rate of velocity. Time, with space, can bend – which encapsulates the phrase Spacetime. Also important are the cosmological implications of Einstein's theory of Special and General relativity, as developed by Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose. Their Big Bang theory (*singularity*) demonstrates mathematically that time has a beginning – that our cosmos is not eternal but exploded into existence just after t (time) = 0. Einstein's revolution of Spacetime, however, has yet to fully integrate itself into popular consciousness. This may be in part because Newton's definition of absolute time is easy to grasp intellectually for modern individuals, whereas Einstein's contributions are more conceptually challenging.

Michelangelo and his contemporaries lived before Isaac Newton. That is to say -

any notion of an absolute time absent of cosmological considerations such as movement

was unavailable to his era. Rather, all discourses on time implicated a host of variables –

usually circumscribed by the relation of time to movement. Also important is the theistic

component. The primary models of temporal perception, including those presented by

Plato, Aristotle, Augustine – as well as their interpreters such as Petrarch and Savonarola

– all insist on the necessity of god. Furthermore, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Newton,

Einstein, and Michelangelo for that matter, where all theists. Only the latest contributors

to cosmology, including Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose, are atheists. This fact

matters, only in that previous thinkers were simply unable to conceive of the cosmos, or

time, absent of deity.

For Michelangelo, as we will demonstrate; all aspects of time, movement, change,

duration, and being have their beginning and end, their cause and conclusion, in the

person of Christ. Christ's temporal fabric is inherently complex. He is unbegotten

(eternal), yet born into time (Incarnation). He is divine (eternal), but also human

(Incarnation). He is unchanging (eternal), yet experienced birth, death, and Resurrection

(human & divine). The temporal dimensions of Christ are therefore vast. From this

perspective, the narrative possibilities and difficulties of representing Christ in paint or

marble are considerable. We at last arrive at our first principle, the substance of which

has been argued throughout this chapter. In the early modern era, time and movement

were variables that implicated one another. To attempt to inhabit early modern modes of

time perception thus requires the contemporary observer to invest time with motion, and to imbue temporal perception with deity.

Michelangelo's narrative approach to compressing multiple subjects into one work of art sets the stage for a temporal continuum – a continuum that flows beyond any single moment. The means of activating temporal flow is insinuated movement. Movement begets the flow of time. That Christ is the active agent, the Prime Mover, that moves time along with Him in a way specific to each composition, is the contention of this dissertation. The question we turn to now is *how* Michelangelo moves time.

Chapter 2:
The *Doni Tondo* and the End of the World

2.1 Introduction

Heaving through the foot-trod cloud of dust and burnished iron, Alexander the

Great surged up the Phrygian steppe to its ancient capitol of Gordium, where the fabled

"Gordian Knot" awaited its belated disentanglement. Neither grease nor ply would do –

only the swift stroke of his sharp sword. The Promethean dimension of our metaphor

couples an intractable conundrum with its elegant solution. The knot's resolution is but a

subplot to Alexander's ingenuity. *Tanto monta cortar como desatar*: It amounts to the

same, cutting as untying.[1]

Michelangelo is our Gordias tying the intractable knot; the knot is his *Doni Tondo*

(c. 1504). Where is our Alexander? While the hope for an art-historical Alexander is but

a hermeneutic phantasm, Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* nonetheless has persistently

beckoned us to procure its enigmatic meaning (fig. 5). Beyond the preternatural clarity of

the painting's figural modeling and vibrant palette is a composition that befuddles. The

Virgin, seated with crossed-legs amidst the verdant green foreground, twists up to her

right with upstretched arms and longing gaze towards the Word become flesh. Joseph

crouches attentively behind Mary, with his loins splayed, in scandalous intimacy with she

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[1] Literary sources for Alexander's unloosing the knot include: Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri* (2.3); Quintus Curtius, *Historiae Alexandri Magni* (3.1.18); Justin*, Pompeius Trogus* (11.7); Aelian, *De Natura Animalium* (13.1). The means by which Alexander resolved the knot vary in the literature. See Robin Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great* (New York: Dial Press, 1973), 149-151. King Ferdinand II of Aragon adopted the phrase "*tanto monta cortar como desatar*" for his royal motto. Antonio Bernat Vistarini and John T. Cull, *Enciclopedia Akal de Emblemas Españoles Illustrados*, 1st ed., s.v. "nudo gordiano, espada, ara, corona."

who has never known a man. The Christ child, as much athlete as savior, is in transit. Is He being passed from mother to earthly father, or vice versa? The directionality of the staged action is decidedly ambiguous.

Our wonderment is compounded by what lurks behind. The picture's middle ground - visually partitioned from the *sacra famiglia* by a thin grey strip of *pietra serena* - is populated by five nude youths in clamorous discourse, and a young John the Baptist. The Baptist at the picture's right approaches the stonewall separating him from the Holy Family, with eyes fixed upon the Christ Child above. The five youths occupy a concavity, perched upon a low-lying wall that evinces architectural modeling. What are they doing, and why are they there? And as we peer beyond the middle ground, manicured architectural features give way to the untouched prelapsarian beauty of landscape. The scrupulously conceived transitions between foreground, middle ground and background foster the reciprocal pattern of looking "in and out."

Our greatest challenge in understanding the picture resides in discerning Michelangelo's overarching conceptual impetus that unifies the composition's *raison d'être*. Simply put - what do the background, middle ground, and foreground of the painting have to do with one another? If we credit Michelangelo with conceiving the *Doni Tondo* as a unified whole, then a unified theory of the composition's global meaning is not only possible but to be desired. In the modern historiography no other interpreter has contributed more to our comprehensive understanding of this demanding picture than Charles de Tolnay.

In volume one (first published in 1943) of his erudite five volume series on Michelangelo, Tolnay proposed a highly influential symbolic reading of the painting where the visual partitions of the composition each correspond to a discreet phase of salvation history. According to his interpretation, the middle ground occupied by the nudes represent the world *ante legem* (before the law) prior to Moses' reception of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. In the foreground, the figures of Joseph and Mary thus embody the world *sub lege* (under the law), between the dispensation of the law to Moses and the Incarnation of Christ. Christ, as de Tolnay proposes, thus embodies the world *sub gratia* (under grace), where the Incarnation of the Word ushers in the New Covenant.[2] Running no more than a few sentences and unencumbered by scholarly citations, Tolnay's tripartite scheme of *ante legem - sub lege - sub gratia* remains the most convincing "unified theory" yet proposed.[3]

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[2] Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Youth*, vol. 1 of 5, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 165.

[3] The following is a précis of the *Doni Tondo's* interpretive historiography: Heinrich Wölfflin, *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance*, trans. Peter and Linda Murray (New York: Phaidon, 1980), 44-45 [first published 1899]; Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, 109-11, 163-168; Colin Eisler, "The Athlete of Virtue: The Iconography of Asceticism," *De Artibus Opuscula: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky* (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 82-97; Mirella Levi D'Ancona, "The *Doni Madonna* by Michelangelo: An Iconographic Study," *The Art Bulletin*, 50 (1968): 43-50; Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 67-70; Leo Steinberg, "The Divine Circle," *Vogue* 164:6 (1974): 138-139; Graham Smith, "A Medici Source for Michelangelo's Doni Tondo," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschicte* 38:1 (1975): 84-85; Peter Heinrich von Blanckenhagen, "Die Ignudi der Madonna Doni," *Festshcrift für Gerhard Kleiner zur seinem funfundsechzigsten Geburtstag*, 205-214, ed. Harald von Keller and Jurgen Kleine (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth, 1976); Sydney Freedberg, *Painting in Italy, 1500-1600* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 34-35; Andrée Hayum, "Michelangelo's Doni Tondo: Holy Family and Family Myth," *Studies in Iconography*, 7-8 (1981-1982): 209-251; Antonio Natali, "L'antico, le Scritture e l'occasione. Ipotesi

The subtlety of Tolnay's intuition that the picture depicts multiple "times" within its compositional structure, and that those "times" progress forward towards the picture plane is breathtaking. It is upon his shoulders that we may see further. And further we may, as problems still persist. The fundamental preoccupation that directs the present inquiry hinges upon a simple interrogative that remains to be answered: Why would Michelangelo invest his depiction of the Holy Family and environs with the temporal progression of salvation history?

Michelangelo painted the *Doni Tondo* in Florence during the early years of the sixteenth century (c.1503-1507) likely on the occasion of Agnolo Doni's marriage to Maddalena Strozzi.[4] The coupling of the wealthy wool merchant to his patrician bride seems but a pretext to the content of Michelangelo's novel creation. While pictures of the Holy Family were standard wedding gifts in Florentine society during the early modern

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sul Tondo Doni," *Il Tondo Doni e il suo Restauro*, 21-37, Gli Uffizi, Studi e Ricerche 2 (Firenze: Centro Di, 1985; Leo Steinberg, "Animadversions: Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà*: The Missing Leg Twenty Years Later," *The Art Bulletin* 71:3 (1989): 498-99; Roberta Olson, *The Florentine Tondo*, 219-226 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Paul Barolsky, "Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* and the Worshipful Beholder," *Source* 22:3 (2003): 8-11; Regina Stefaniak, *Mysterium Magnum: Michelangelo's Tondo Doni* (Brill: Leiden, 2008); Chiara Franceschini, "The Nudes in Limbo: Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* Reconsidered," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 73 (2010): 137-80; Antonio Natali, *Michelangelo: Inside and Outside the Uffizi*, 29-42 (Firenze: Maschietto Editor, 2014).

[4] As common with Michelangelo, since there is no contract for the *Doni Tondo* the date of the painting has been somewhat controversial. The marriage of Agnolo Doni and Maddalena Strozzi on 31 January 1504, where 1503 is the conventional *post quem* for the painting, is supported by Charles de Tolnay, although Antonio Natali has proposed an *ante quem* of 1507. It is nonetheless of crucial importance that the picture was painted in the earliest years of the sixteenth century. See, Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, 109; Antonio Natali, *Michelangelo*, 29.

era – the theme of marriage seems to have little bearing on the painting's content beyond the presence of the Holy Family itself.[5] Rather, radical apocalyptic tremors produced by the fiery Dominican preacher and monk, Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), provide a fertile context of inquiry to understand Michelangelo's eschatological vision for the *Doni Tondo*.

The social-religious milieu of Florence at the turn of the sixteenth century was charged with widespread expectations for punishment and judgment due to Florence's impiety, as well as repentant hope for the Second Coming of Christ. According to Savonarola - who for a time successfully fashioned himself as a true prophet and mouthpiece of God - the Florentines would be punished unless they abandon usury and sodomy in preparation for the end of the world. It is within the matrix of dread and hopeful expectation of Christ's return that I seek to locate Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo*.

The formal arrangement of the painting in relation to its eschatological content bespeaks a picture that maps the movement of salvific time through space. The Edenic landscape of the background pictures the "deep time" of Paradise where the drama of sin entered the world. The middleground occupied by the nudes within their low-lying basin instructs us in the art of repentance and the removal of concupiscence through the putting off of sin in the rite of baptism. The foreground stages a Christological coup where Christ's bi-directional movement between Mary and Joseph propels the omnipresence of Christ both in and out of the fictive space. This theological expression in visual form affirms Christ as the alpha and omega – the beginning and end of time.

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[5] For the artistic, social, and religious context of the *tondo* as a genre in Florentine society, see, Olson, *Florentine Tondo*.

The movement of salvific time across space has deep roots in the medieval tradition of *mappae mundi*, or maps of the world. Rather than a preoccupation with the mathematical measurement of distances or naturalistic depiction of topography, *mappae mundi* picture the layering of history upon geographical space. Event/places are plotted across the surface of the map following a spatio-temporal progression from Paradise at the top of the map, to the end of the world at the bottom of the map. As the *Doni Tondo* is round like *mappae mundi*, and expresses a similar logic of eschatological time expressed through space, we will employ the medieval *mappae mundi* as an analytic tool in the pursuit of a "unified theory" for the painting.

The order of our analysis will follow Michelangelo's distinct visual partitions between the background landscape, the middle ground concavity populated by the nudes and John the Baptist, and the tightly knit Holy Family in the foreground. We will move with Michelangelo through time and space from back to front and consider the reciprocal necessity of looking "in and out," perpendicular to the picture plane. Rather than a static picturing of salvation history we will discover a dynamic eschatological continuum in which we as viewers are implicated and participate. In order to move with Michelangelo's time, we must begin in the deep time of the artist's Edenic landscape where/when corruption first entered the world: Paradise.

2.2 Background: The Deep Time of Paradise Lost

Michelangelo was not particularly interested in landscape. In his art the human body fully contains and expresses the wonder and gravitas of the cosmos, where the nude male figure embodies the pinnacle of God's creation in the material world. Flora and

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fauna could occupy but a small place in the shadow cast by the only creature to be made in the image and likeness of God – the human being (Gen. 1:27). Yet in the *Doni Tondo*, the entirety of the background beyond the five male nudes is given over to landscape and sky. While the background landscape only occupies a quarter of the picture's painted surface, its prominence as illusionistic space is vast, far outpacing the more compact passages of the middle ground and foreground. Unless Michelangelo was given over to boredom when finally reaching the picture's zone beyond the human figures, we may presume that the tondo's distant landscape fulfills a succinct purpose in relation to the content of the middle and foreground.

We are able to visually access the background by peering to either side of Christ and Joseph, whose heads both crown the Holy Family group in the foreground and divide the background into two co-equal lateral zones.[6] The nudes behind the Holy Family group preclude total vision of the background landscape's lower zone beyond their low-lying wall. It is between such compositional delimitations that we discern the specific geographical features the background proposes.

The upper zone of the tondo, from the wrist of Mary's upraised right arm across to Joseph's left shoulder, is comprised of a crystalline blue sky that fades progressively to a hazy atmospheric white as the sky approaches its horizon line. The horizon line at the tondo's left is articulated by two diminutive mountain ranges that run horizontally behind the head's of the nude duo, across to Mary's upraised right arm. The proximal mountain

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[6] In regard to the identity of the figure of Joseph, Leo Steinberg and Regina Stefaniak have argued that Joseph doubles as God the Father, given the provocative position of Mary between his legs, and the divine provenance of Christ. Steinberg, "Divine Circle," 138-143; Steinberg, "Animadversions," 499; Stefaniak, *Mysterium*, 36-56.

range is a darker hue of blue, where the distal range behind is atmospherically degraded to indicate further distance. The foot of the proximal mountain range is met by an expansive body of water, thus doubling as a shoreline. This body of water approaches the nudes in the middle ground, as Michelangelo has in-painted the water between the interior of Mary's right forearm and Joseph's golden cloak that falls at Christ's right side.

The low-lying mountain range at the tondo's left runs behind the Holy Family to the right where we encounter a sharp incline towards a prominent mountain peak. Fertile grasslands descend from the foot of the peak, and occupy the entirety of the zone behind the nude trio, as Michelangelo in-painted grass between the nude's interstices all the way to the tondo's right edge. The landscape's composition is anything but haphazard. By reversing our direction of analysis from right to left, we discern that the mountain peak above its grassy knoll descends leftward towards a great flood plain, the flow of which is directed towards the middle ground precipice of the nudes. Mountains that culminate in a peak of significant height, fertile grasslands and a flood plain of water comprise the prominent elements of the picture's background.

2.2.1 The Geography of Paradise

Several have noted the paradisiacal disposition of the *Doni Tondo's* verdant background, but we have yet to venture beyond what seems self-evident. Does the background picture more than an artistic allusion of a pristine past?[7] Our interrogative is

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[7] In relation to the background of the painting, Regina Stefaniak remarks, "…remote past [background] where the loss of distant forms through aerial perspective hints at the beginning of the formation of mountains and hills nad the greening of the earth." Mirella Levi d'Ancona's analysis of the picture's plant symbolism also makes note of what she believes to be a cedar tree in the background at the foot of the mountain, as well as the

crucial, for it stages the *phronema* of our interpretation in its totality. How does the

background contribute to the painting's overarching content? The eschatological

grounding of the picture is expressed by the landscape's geography – the geography of

Paradise – where humanity first fell. Paradise lost is the necessary pretext for Christ's

redemptive work, his First Coming in the flesh, and his Second Coming at the end of

time.

The geography of Paradise was first given shape by the book of Genesis, and

from the patristic period to the early modern era, it provided the raw exegetical material

for "mapping" the physical constitution of Eden.[8] According to the second chapter of

Genesis, "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put

the man he had formed" (Gen. 2:8). In addition to placing Adam in the easterly Eden,

Genesis continues: "A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was

separated into four headwaters" (Gen. 2:10). Two Alexandrian writers, Philo (c. 25 BC -

50 AD) and Origen (c. 184-254) (Jewish and Christian respectively) promoted allegorical

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water in the far distance as "an allusion to the purifying waters of baptism..." Stefaniak, *Mysterium*, 35; d'Ancona, "*Doni* Madonna," 46-47.

[8] My argument follows Alessandro Scaffi's erudite survey of the historical understanding of Paradise as a real place on earth, with a concrete geography. Alessandro Scafi, *Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 32-61. See also, Frank Dawson Adams, *The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences* (Toronto: General Publishing Company, 1938); Francesca Fiorani, *The Marvel of Maps: Art, Cartography and Politics in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). For an engaging discussion on the role of landscape and geography in Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise*, see, Amy R. Bloch, *Lorenzo Ghiberti's* Gates of Paradise*: Humanism, History, and Artistic Philosophy in the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), esp. pp. 1-48.

interpretations. But it was Augustine's (354-430) literal interpretation of Genesis that seized the minds of subsequent exegetes, promoting Eden as a physical place.[9]

Augustine asserted that, "Consequently, paradise, in which God placed him, should be understood as simply a place, that is, a land, where an earthly man would live."[10] By asserting that Eden was a physical place, commentators speculated as to what Eden may look like, taking their initial inspiration from Genesis. Michelangelo's landscape corresponds to the physical characteristics associated with Paradise, including the Garden of Eden situated on a high mountain, and the four rivers of Paradise running forth from it.

The mountain peak in the *Doni Tondo's* background towers above its surrounding landscape. In his *Commentary on Genesis*, St. Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306-373) asserts, "Paradise is situated on a great height, and the rivers [of paradise] are swallowed up under the surrounding sea."[11] St. Ephrem also ruminates on the Garden's great height in his work of poetry, *Hymns on Paradise,* expressing his vision in the first person: "I gazed upon Paradise; the summit of every mountain is lower than its summit, the crest of the flood reached only its foothills."[12] In his descriptions, Ephrem locates the two most

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[9] Scafi, *Mapping Paradise*, 32-43.

[10] Translation from Scafi, Ibid., 46. "ita et paradisus, in quo cum conlocavit deus, nihil aliud quam lucus quidam intellegature terrae scilicet, ubi habitaret homo terrenus." Sancti Augustini, *De Genesi ad litteram*,VIII.1.1, *PL* XXXIV, col. 371.

[11] Ephrem the Syrian, *The Commentary on Genesis* II.6, in *Hymns of Paradise*, trans. Sebastian Brock (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 201.

[12] Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* I.4, in Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise*, 78.

prominent elements of the geography of Paradise: a high mountain and waters that surround the foothills of its peak.

The Venerable Bede (c. 672-735) also reiterates the concrete notion that Paradise is a real place located on the earth, with rivers flowing forth from a mountain at such an altitude that it survived untouched by the Flood that engulfed the rest of the earth (Gen. 7, 8:1-19).[13] The summation of the exegetical traditions of describing the geography of Paradise are collected in the anonymous twelfth century medieval *Glossa ordinaria*, a compendium of commentaries on the scriptures comprised of quotations from the Church Fathers.[14] Traditionally attributed to Walafrid Strabo (c. 808-849), the *Glossa* suggests that in regards to Paradise, "we know that it is on earth; and that that there is an ocean in between, and that there are mountains situated as to form a barrier…located [paradise] on high…"[15] Although Paradise was believed to exist on earth, however, it was also believed that this place, located somewhere "in the east" was utterly inaccessible to man due to Adam and Eve's introduction of original sin into the Garden: "After original sin, this place was inaccessible to man…"[16] Thus the low-lying wall upon which the nudes recline

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[13] "We are not allowed to doubt that the place was and is on earth."; "nos tamen locum hunc fuisse et esse terrenum dubitare non licet." Beda, *In Genesim*, I.ii.8, *CCSL* CXVIIIA, p. 46. For Bede's assertion that Paradise was located at a great height, untouched by the Flood, see Beda, *In Genesim*, I.ii.8.

[14] For a discussion of the *Glossa* and its place in medieval exegesis, see Scafi, *Mapping Paradise*, 49-51; as well as nt. 36, p. 59 for a concise bibliography on the *Glossa*.

[15] "Scimus eum terrenum esse: et interiecto oceano, et montibus oppositis…in alto situm." Walafridus Strabus, *Glossa ordinaria*, *PL* CXIII, II.8, col. 86.

[16] Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XIV.3.2-4, ed. by Wallace Martin Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911): "Cuius loci post peccatum hominis aditus interclusus est…"

may be considered a barrier between background and foreground, a symbolic precipice beyond which the nudes may not trespass.

2.2.2 Internal Logic of *Mappae Mundi*: Movement of Salvific Time Across Space

That the physical features of Michelangelo's background correspond to the geography of Paradise, with its mountain peak and flowing waters, bespeaks a compositional approach in the *Doni Tondo* that stages the earliest movement of salvation history in the background – both the *place* and *time* where sin entered the world. According to patristic and medieval exegesis of Genesis 2:8, "paradise is in the east."[17] The belief that Paradise was a place on earth fostered the medieval approach of *mappae mundi* to actually depict the Garden of Eden on maps. These maps plot the space-time progression of salvation history across the surface of the earth, with Paradise as the originary "place" where man's fall occurred in time. In order to appreciate Michelangelo's compositional progression of salvific time through illusionistic space in the *Doni Tondo*, flowing from background to foreground (or "in and out"), we may compare the artist's approach to that of *mappae mundi*.

The Ebstorf world map (c. 1235-40) (fig. 6) is representative of the pinnacle of medieval *mappae mundi*, with its large size, rich detail, and highly developed eschatological scheme. As Alessandro Scafi notes, "On later medieval *mappae mundi*, time was made to move across space."[18] History thus can be understood to be

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[17] "Paradisum in oriente situm." Strabus, *Glossa*, *PL* CXIII, II.8, col. 86.

[18] Scafi, *Mapping Paradise*, 116. For a penetrating analysis of the relationship of space and time in *mappae mundi*, see Scafi, 125-159.

predominant over geography for such maps, and the internal logic of the maps themselves supports this conclusion. The formal structure of the Ebstorf map circumscribes the surface of the earth within a large circle. The cardinal direction at the top of the map is East, unlike modern map making where North is oriented at the top. In the East (top), there is a large portrait of Christ flanked by a rectangular representation of Paradise. Within Paradise, there are Adam and Eve, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, as well as the four rivers of paradise depicted schematically as four tendril-like curls.

Time is thus staged East to West (top to bottom) across the surface of the map. From Paradise moving west, we reach Jerusalem in the center of the map, enclosed by four golden walls containing the Risen Christ within. Jerusalem serves as an intermediary pole, both spatially and temporally from Paradise, as Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection occurred in the locale of that most holy city – the physical place where salvific time and humanity were loosed from the bonds of sin initiated in the Garden. Moving further West towards the bottom of the map, we approach the geographical zone of Paradise's final pole – the Second Coming of Christ, Judgment of the living and the dead, and the world created anew in Christ, all to occur in Western Europe. To reaffirm the omnipresent interpenetration of Christ's presence in salvific time mapped across space, Christ's hands are depicted at the edge of the maps' North-South pole (left-right), with his feet at the Western most limit (bottom) of the map. As Scafi states, "Christ's feet indicate[s] both the western limits of the earth and the impending end of time."[19]

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[19] Scafi, *Mapping Paradise*, 150. For a succinct bibliography of the Ebstorf Map, see Scafi, nt. 79, p. 158.

Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141) provides a stunning synthesis of space-time understood within Christian eschatological thinking, which elegantly overlaps with our comparison of *mappae mundi* and the *Doni Tondo.* The Saxon's synthesis merits quotation at length:

> In the succession of historical events the order of space and the order of time seem to be in almost complete correspondence. Therefore, divine providence's arrangement seems to have been that what was brought about at the beginning of time would also have been brought about in the east – at the beginning, so to speak, of the world as space – and then, as time proceeded towards its end, the center of events would have shifted to the west, so that we may recognize out of this that the world nears its end in time as the course of events has already reached the extremity of the world in space. Indeed, the first man was placed after his creation in the east, in the Garden of Eden, so that his progeny should spread throughout the orb from that origin. Likewise, after the Flood, the earliest kingdoms and the center of the world were in the eastern regions, amongst the Assyrians, the Chaldeans and the Medes. Afterwards, dominion passed to the Greeks; then, as the end of the world approached, supreme power descended in the Occident to the Romans – who inhabited at the extremity, so to speak, of the earth.[20]

Thus the Ebstorf wold map, and *mappae mundi* at large, provides a productive means of analyzing Michelangelo's composition. We have argued that the background of the *Doni Tondo* pictures a geographically sensitive exposition of Paradise parallel to traditional exegetical commentary on Eden as a place in the east. Furthermore, the *Doni*

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[20] Translated by Scafi, Ibid., 126-27. Hugh of St. Victor, *De arche noe*, IV.9, *CCCM* CLXXVI, pp. 111-12: "Ordo autem loci et ordo temporis fere per omnia secundum rerum gestarum seriem concurrere videntur. Et ita per divinam providentiam videtur esse dispositum, ut que in principio temporum gerebantur, in oriente – quasi in principio mundi – gererentur, ac deinde ad finem profluente tempore usque ad occidentem rerum summa descenderet, ut ex hoc ipso agnoscamus appropinquare finem seculi, quia rerum cursus iam attigit finem mundi. Ideo primus homo in oriente in hortis Eden conditus collocatur at ab illo principio propago posteritatis in orbem terrarum proflueret. Item post diluvium principium regnorum et caput mundi in Assyriis et Chaldeis et Medis in partibus orientis fuit, deinde ad Grecos venit; postremo circa finem seculi ad Romanos in occidente – quasi in fine mundi habitants – potestas summa descendit."

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Tondo's circular composition approximates the formal geometry of a *mappa mundi*. As Charles de Tolnay expounds on Michelangelo's creation, "being enclosed in a circular frame, it [*Doni*] gives the impression of a sphere, a kind of glass ball into which one looks." Further commenting on this phenomenon, Tolnay concludes, "The spherical composition we have described is not only formal but has a symbolic significance as well. The 'globe of the world' is here, and in it we see the three main epochs of human development."[21]

<u>Preliminary Synthesis: Ebstorf world map & *Doni Tondo*</u>

Before embarking towards the middle ground of Michelangelo's salvific exposition where the nudes engage in boisterous gestural dialogue, we may summarize our current position. The painting's background pictures Paradise geographically, where its corresponding "time" is that of the deep past where sin entered the world. The space-time of the background stages a progressive movement of salvific time towards the picture plane, where the illusionistic space of the painting serves as time's conduit.

According to the planar surface of the painting, the *Doni Tondo*, like *mappae mundi*, orients the beginning of time in Paradise at the top of the composition, the "eastern" region where the background is literally visible in the top quarter of its painted surface. The illusionistic movement of space and time in the painting, however, progresses "in and out" or perpendicular to the picture plane. This is an essential aspect

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[21] Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, 110, 165, respectively. In reference to the 'three epochs of humanity', Tolnay cites his earlier symbolic reading of the picture representing the world *ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia*. Leo Steinberg and Regina Stefaniak also acknowledge the paintings circular form as a "globe." Steinberg, "Divine Circle," 139; Stefaniak, *Mysterium*, 34.

of the *Doni Tondo's* formal structure that warrants serious consideration. Our aim to synthesize the global meaning of the painting – allowing the background, middle ground, and foreground to dialogue with one another – is dependent upon elucidating the nature of each zonal progression of the picture's illusionistic space. How does Paradise lost in the background contextualize the action unfolding in the middle ground?

The actions of the nudes in the middleground embody a ritual process of putting off sin within a baptismal context. By evoking the rite of baptism, Michelangelo creates the conditions to respond pictorially not only to the effects of paradise lost in the background, but also the contemporaneous prophetic tremors espoused by Girolamo Savonarola in the artist's own day. The picture grafts the anxiety for Florence's repentance circa 1500 into the global drama of salvation history. Springing from the apocalyptic milieu of Savonarolan Florence, Michelangelo injects the tremors of current events into history painting. The message is repentance, dramatized by the nudes' preoccupation with donning their baptismal robes.

2.3 Middleground: Savonarola & the Art of Repentance

"It was decided that he should be put to death, and that he should be burnt alive…Certain women were found kneeling in the Piazza on the spot where the *Frati* had been burnt, out of veneration."[22] Such is the chronicle left to us by the Florentine apothecary Luca Landucci in his journal entry of the 22nd and 26th of May, 1498.

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[22] Luca Landucci, *A Florentine Diary*, trans. Alice de Rosen Jervis (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 142-143.

Landucci speaks of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), prophetic

preacher, reformer of Florence, and condemned heretic (fig. 7).

Turmoil in Florence during the 1490's upon the death of Lorenzo de'Medici

(1449-1492) in 1492, and the eventual expulsion of the Medici from Florence in 1494,

reached a fever pitch with the invasion of Italy of Charles VIII of France in September

1494. From this point until his death on 22nd of May 1498, Savonarola became the de

facto ruler of Florence.[23] Amongst the many qualities often ascribed to the friar during

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[23] Savonarolan literature is vast; included is a survey of the most recent literature as well as select touchstone texts. Girolamo Savonarola, *Apologetic Writings*, trans. and ed. Michèle Mulchahey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Paul Strathern, *Death in Florence: The Medici, Savonarola and the Battle for the Soul of Renaissance Italy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011); Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola: The Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Prophet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Amos Edelheit, *Ficino, Pico and Savonarola: The Evolution of Humanist Theology 1461/2 – 1498* (Boston: Brill, 2008); Lauro Martinez, *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Lauro Martinez, *Scourge and Fire: Savonarola and Renaissance Florence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006); Girolamo Savonarola, *Selected Writings of Girolamo Savonarola*, trans. and ed. by Anne Borelli, Maria Pastore Passaro and Donald Beebe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Desmond Seward, *The Burning of the Vanities: Savonarola and the Borgia Pope* (Stroud: Sutton, 2006); Armando F. Verde, O.P. "Et andando a San Gimignano a predicarvi: Alle origini della profezia savonaroliana," *Vivens Homo* IX (1998): 269-295; Rab Hatfield, "Botticelli's Mystic Nativity, Savonarola and the Millennium," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 58 (1995): 88-114; Girolamo Savonarola, *Scritti Vari*, ed. Armando F. Verde, O.P. (Roma: A. Belardetti, 1992); Ronald Steinberg, *Fra Girolamo Savonarola, Florentine Art, and Renaissance Historiography* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977); Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). For prophecy in the middle ages and early modern era, see: Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore & the Prophetic Future: A Medieval Study in Historical Thinking* (London: Sutton, 1999); Roberto Rusconi, *Profezia e profeti alle fine del Medioevo* (Roma: Viella, 1999); *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period*, ed. Marjorie Reeves New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Marjorie Reeves, *Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

this short-lived republican period, two strike us as being most pressing in relation to the impetus that informs the *Doni Tondo's* program: Savonarola's prophetic visions for the end of the world and his vociferous preaching against sodomy.

Savonarola was convinced that in order to prepare for the coming scourge of Italy and restoration of the Church, Florentines must repent of their sins. Preparation for the end required repentance. Murmurs of Florence's perceived decadence had been at the point of Pope Gregory XI's pen as early as 1376, writing:

> In the whole world I believe there are no two sins more abominable than those that prevail among the Florentines…The first is their usury and infidelity…The second is so abominable that I dare not mention it.[24]

The abomination Gregory dare not mention is sodomy – usually referred to sex between males.

We are confronted with a disposition of mind and spirit so increasingly alien to our contemporary sensibilities that to discuss homosexual identity so abruptly seems coarse, if not offensive. But such is the texture of early modern Florence.[25] The repression of sodomy and other perceived vices including gambling and usury was central to Savonarola's moral reform of Florence, and stages the backdrop for his apocalyptic vision. From 1432-1502 the government of Florence inaugurated the

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[24] My discussion of Savonarola's moral reform in Florence follows Michael Rocke's singular study on homosexuality and male culture in Renaissance Florence. Quote taken from Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3. Arturo Segre, "I dispacci di Cristoforo da Piacenza, procuratore mantovano alla corte pontificale," *Archivio storico italiano*, 5th ser., 43 (1909): 85 (letter of Jan. 1).

[25] For a discussion of the term sodomy and its cultural context in fifteenth century Florence, see Rocke. *Forbidden Friendships*, 3-16.

judiciary Officers of the Night (*Ufficiali di notte*) to curtail illicit behavior. Savonarola's

outspoken preaching on the matter affected citizens to such an extent that just prior to

Lorenzo the Magnificent's death in April 1492, the young Florentine patrician Niccolò di

Braccio Guicciardini wrote to his relative Piero Guicciardini:

> God sent this scourge so that we would repent of our sins, especially sodomy,
> which he wants to be done away with, and that if between now and August we
> don't correct ourselves these streets will run with blood…such that all of us are
> frightened, especially me. God help us.[26]

In his political sermon of December 14, 1494, Savonarola recommended to his

male audience that, "The Signoria must make a law against that cursed vice of sodomy,

for which Florence is defamed throughout all of Italy…that is without mercy…."[27] Two

years later on May 8, 1496, the friar asserted that "Good government is punishing the evil

ones and getting sodomites and the wicked out of your city."[28] The reverberations must

have been terrifying, sounding out through the churches of Florence. Yet, what we

encounter here is the "early modern" period – the origins of things we predilect to

associate with ourselves now – as a thin membrane bulging over a medieval past where

the slightest puncture sends forth a thousand years of deep seated sentiment. Many

Florentines responded like Niccolò Guicciardini, perhaps not just out of fear, but because

Savonarola's message echoed into a long past embedded in each individual. Understood

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[26] Ibid., 201. Roberto Ridolfi, *Studi savonaroliani* (Florence: Olschki, 1935), 262-263.

[27] Ibid., 205. Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Aggeo, con il Trattato circa il reggimento e governo della città di Firenze*, ed. Luigi Firpo (Roma: A. Belardetti, 1965), 220.

[28] Ibid., 195. Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Ruth e Michea*, 1:28 (May 8, 1496), ed. Vincenzo Romano, 2 vols. (Roma: A. Belardetti, 1962).

through this foggy lens, sodomy threatened the existential stability of the Florentine

republic, because all human action existed within the matrix of sin and redemption in

Christ…at least according to Savonarola. As the apothecary Landucci ruminates even two

years after the friar's execution, "as Fra Girolamo had often said…Florence had no other

King but Christ."[29]

2.3.1 Savonarola's "Adoration of the Cross" as Pretext for Michelangelo's Nudes

Savonarola's call to repentance of the citizens of Florence reached its prophetic

climax in a vision delivered in Santa Maria del Fiore as two sermons during Lent (30

March and 10 April) of 1496 – an event which Michelangelo could have attended, given

the artist had not yet departed for his first sojourn to Rome.[30] The sermon, known as the

"Adoration of the Cross," pictures a vision of "cataclysm and redemption" as Donald

Beebe describes, which predicted the conversion of the pagans and the imminent

annihilation of the Christian world.[31] The two sermons were so controversial that

Savonarola's fellow Dominican *frate* and follower, Domenico Benivieni, synthesized the

vision in his *Treatise in Defense and Testing of the Doctrine and Prophecy Preached by*

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[29] Landucci's journal entry is dated April 14th, 1500. Landucci, *Diary*, 167.

[30] Michelangelo departed Florence for Rome on 4 July 1496. Gaetano Milanesi, ed., *Le lettere di Michelangelo coi ricordi ed contratti artistici* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1875), 641.

[31] Donald Beebe, "Savonarolan Aesthetics and Their Implementation in the Graphic Arts" (PhD thesis, Yale University 1998), 171.

Friar Girolamo of Ferrara in the City of Florence, printed and published on 28 May 1496.[32]

Prominent themes in the synthesized and printed version include a vision of a large cross set atop a hill. On the right side of the cross is the city of Jerusalem, and on the left the cities of Rome and Florence. Issuing forth from the foot of the cross is a river of blood. A number of infidels populate the right side of the cross, whose foreheads are splattered with blood in the form of the cross. The infidels strip themselves of their clothes and run to the river of blood, bathing with delight. Only a small number of the Christians on the left side of the cross, however, run to the river of blood like the infidels. Most Christians covered the blood inscribed cross on their foreheads, and ran to take the clothes that the infidels left behind to dress themselves. Amidst a tempestuous storm, many were saved beneath the foot of the cross, but multitudes were killed.[33]

Savonarola's vision pictures the process of repentance via the willingness of the infidels to strip and bathe in the cleansing waters of Christ's blood, unlike most Christians who sought to cover themselves with the infidels' sloughed garments. Stripping, bathing, and the interplay of putting on and off garments comprise Savonarola's symbolic language of repentance, judgment and apocalypse. Importantly, the version of the "Adoration of the Cross" was accompanied by a woodcut illustration

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[32] Beebe, "Savonarolan Aesthetics," 171. Domenico Benivieni, *Tractato di Maestro Domenico Benivieni Prete Fiorentino in defensione et probatione della doctrina et profethie predicate da Frate Hieronimo da Ferrara nella citta di Firenze* (Florence: Sir Francesco Bonaccorsi for Pietro Pacini, 28 May 1496). fol. f.iii. verso.

[33] I compress this version of Bienvini's tract from the full text found in Beebe, "Savonarolan Aesthetics," 173-175. Bienvieni, *Tractato*, f.ii.recto - f.iv. verso.

(fig. 8). Bathing in Christ's blood is no doubt an evocation of the cleansing power of Christian baptism, where sin is put off and Christ put on, as St. Paul declares, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

The illustration, which is bifurcated by the stream of blood running from the cross, expresses the varied responses to those present who have all received the blood inscribed cross on their foreheads (one may note that the image presents the vision in inverse – Jerusalem on the left with Rome and Florence on the right). Many Christians on the right cover their foreheads in shame, while infidels on the left kneel unclothed in the river, or are in the process of taking off their garments. Crucially, two figures reach across the stream, the infidel on the left handing his garment to the Christian on the right. The entirety of the illustration's graphic symbolism of apocalyptic repentance is synopsized on the putting on and off of garments, all within the baptismal context of Christ's cleansing blood.

As we will discuss shortly, it is the contrast of repentance and intransigence, acted out through the gestural putting on and off of garments in a baptismal context, which informs our interpretation of Michelangelo's nudes in the middleground of the *Doni Tondo*. Paradise lost in the background is the pretext for the cleansing of sin in the middleground – just as the prerequisite for the end of time is repentance itself. Before analyzing the nudes' gestural intercourse directly, however, we must grapple with the root of sin itself – that which is cleansed in the purifying waters of baptism:

concupiscence.[34] Concupiscent desire is the thread that binds Savonarola's preaching against sodomy and the need for renewal to the baptismal setting Michelangelo's nudes embody.

2.3.2 Grace and Renewal: Removal of Concupiscence in Baptism

Concupiscence, often synonymous with *libido* and *cupiditas* in the writings of the Church Fathers, denotes the burning character of lust – all three of which are consequences of the disordering of desire, loosed from reason, due to the Original Sin transmitted to subsequent generations from the Fall of Adam in Paradise.[35] Concupiscence understood as the impulse to pursue that which is not directed towards God was the term, or state, utilized to describe the root of all sin. What the Christian rite of Baptism purports to offer is the full remission of sins together with concupiscence towards a "progressive perfection of new life in Christ."[36]

According to St. Augustine, while the guilt of *concupiscentia* is forgiven in the cleansing water of baptism, the baptized remain tempted by the movements (*motus*) or inclination to act against that which has been forgiven: "there can be conversion of some,

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[34] "In moral theology the inordinate desire for temporal ends which has its seat in the senses. The notion of concupiscence has its biblical foundations especially in the teachings of St. Paul (Rom. 7:7) and was developed by St. Augustine in his struggle against Pelagianism. According to Augustine the cause of concupiscence is the Fall of Adam, who, having lost Original Righteousness, transmitted to us a nature in which the desires of the flesh are no longer subordinate to reason." *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., s.v. "concupiscence."

[35] For a lexical discussion on the language of desire in Roman and Latin Christian literature, see, Timo Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 15-58.

[36] Nisula, *Concupiscence*, 331.

not all...."[37] Thus as Augustine describes, "When occasion for lusting arises, yet no evil desire is excited, not even against our will, we have full health."[38] Concupiscence for those who lived under the law (*sub lege*) was something of an irresistible force, yet for those who live under grace (*sub gratia*) after the Incarnation of Christ, the force of concupiscence may be resisted, refusing consent of the stirrings of the flesh through the power of baptism.[39]

The foundation we have laid for our analysis of the nudes in Michelangelo's middleground consists of reckoning with the interplay between what was lost in Paradise (background), how it can be regained (middleground), and the general impetus as to why Michelangelo would have constructed his composition in such a curious manner. As we will see, the nudes embody a crucial nexus point where the intersection of salvific time across space, as pictured schematically by *mappae mundi*, coalesces with contemporary events in Florence circa 1500. The middleground of Michelangelo's picture is the intermediate proving ground for repentance in preparation for the end of the world. Savonarola's preaching against sodomy and his vision of the "Adoration of the Cross" with its complementary woodcut inflects the artist's visual language of the putting off of sin, and the putting on of righteousness - envisaged by the nudes' operative relation to the handling of their garments.

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[37] Ibid., 331-332. Sancti Augustini, *Contra Iulianum*, VI, *PL* XLIV, col. 60.

[38] "cum euro occurrit quod concupiscatur, nec desideria mala nobis etiam nolentibus commouentur, sanitas plena est." Augustini, *Contra Iulianum*, col. 60. Translated from, Nisula, *Concupiscence*, 333.

[39] Ibid., 338-339.

2.3.3 The Nudes

Few aspects of the *Doni Tondo* have been more debated than the purpose and function of the nudes in the middleground of the painting. Interpretations range from the nudes as representing five major prophets of the Old Testament, shepherds, the various ages of man, the world *ante legem* awaiting the coming of Christ, wingless angels holding a curtain behind the Holy Family, athletes of the Church, and Neoplatonic daemons. The most promising propositions, however, are anchored in the baptismal context, for they are most sensitive to the thematic content of the other zones of the painting.[40] The encroaching waters of the picture's background coupled with the nudity of the middleground figures placed within a low-lying basin provide the salient ingredients to evoke Christian baptism. As Veronique Dalmasso succinctly asserts, "Nudity is a prerequisite to the significance of the act of donning the baptismal robe, an

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[40] Five major prophets of the Old Testament: Giovan Tommaso, *La filosofia del concetto in opere d'arte* (Firenze: Tofani, 1851), 36-44; Shepherds: Girolamo Mancini, *Vita di Luca Signorelli* (Florence: Carnesecchi, 1903), 70; Various ages of man: Carl Justi, *Michelangelo, Neue Beiträge zur Erklärung seiner Werke* (Berlin: Grote, 1909), 182f; World *ante legem*: Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, 165; Wingless angels: Johannes Wilde, "Michelangelo and Leonardo," *The Burlington Magazine* 95:600 (Mar., 1953): 69; Athletes of the Church: Eisler, "Athlete of Virtue," 82-97; Neoplatonic daemons: Stefaniak, *Mysterium*, 93-105; For those who promote a reading of the nudes associated with baptism: Valerio Mariani, *Michelangelo* (Turino: Unione tipografico – Editrice torinese, 1942), 55; Mirella Levi d'Ancona, "The *Doni Madonna* by Michelangelo: An Iconographic Study," *The Art Bulletin*, 50:1 (Mar., 1968): 45-50; Andrée Hayum, "Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo*: Holy Family and Family Myth," *Studies in Iconography* 7-8 (1981-1982): 214-216; Chiara Franceshini, "The Nudes in Limbo: Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* Reconsidered," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 73 (2010): 137-180; Diane Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed: Seeing Sex in Renaissance Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 173-179.

important part of the rite that signals the novitiate's transformation, the abandonment of the state of sin."[41]

Masaccio's *Baptism of the Neophytes* in the Brancacci Chapel, Florence (fig. 9), presents two figures fully undressed, except a small loincloth, with a third figure behind in the process of taking off his robe.[42] Few interpreters of the *Doni Tondo's* nudes, however, have been willing to acknowledge the homoerotic disposition of Michelangelo's neophytes.[43] Furthermore, the discreet actions executed by the denuded youths' manipulation of their robes have also evaded close examination. Savonarola's call to repentance, perhaps especially for the perceived sin of sodomy, motivates the interplay between nudity and the tussle of garments in Michelangelo's middleground. The nudes' response to their robes – either putting on or taking off – illustrates their respective states of repentance and obstinance within the painting's movement of salvific time through space.

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[41] Dalmasso's assertion springs from an analysis of Tuscan representations of baptism. Véronique Dalmasso, "*Integritas*, *Proportio*, and *Claritas*: The Body in Tuscan Representations of Baptism, 1300-1450," *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art*, ed. Sherry C.M. Linquist, 231-250 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

[42] Dalmasso presents Lorenzo and Jacopo Salimbeni's *Baptism of the Neophytes* in the Oratory of St. John, Urbino (1416), and Masolino's mural in the Baptistery of Castiglione Olona (1435), as additional examples of nudity depicted within the baptismal context. Dalmasso, "*Integritas*," 231-236.

[43] Mirella Levi d'Ancona and Diane Wolfthal both acknowledge the homoerotic tenor of the nude youths, and Wolfthal explicitly proposes concupiscence and sodomy as a comparative foil to the purity of the Holy Family in the foreground. d'Ancona, "*Doni Madonna*," 46-48; Wofthal, *Marital Bed*, 174.

Formal Analysis: The Nudes, Putting off Sin, and the Baptismal Garment

The five nudes in the middleground are visually placed to either side of the Holy Family in the foreground, with a group of two on the picture's left, and group of three opposite. They stand and perch near the corrugated wall that spans the breadth of the painting's visual field, forming an elliptical concavity arching towards the picture's background. For clarity of analysis, we will employ the shorthand for the two nudes to the Holy Family's right as L1 and L2. For the three nudes on the Holy Family's left – R1, R2, and R3 (see figs. 10-11).

The duo at the picture's left (fig. 10) are dually engaged in putting on the lighter colored cloth suspended on L2's outstretched left forearm. Past, present and future actions are compressed within a narrative focused on the handling of their garments. L1, perched atop the wall with legs crossed, sits on a soiled greenish garment that also runs beneath the hand and buttocks of L2. We can discern that this garment is in the process of being sloughed off, given that it is pinned beneath them both. Importantly, as we follow the soiled garment up from its lower-most hem near L2's left foot, as it streams beneath their posterior, the garment wraps around L1's right flank, terminating near his right shoulder. The garment slips from L1's right shoulder as he reaches behind L2 to pull the light garment onto L2's left arm. The gaze of both figures fixates upon the action at hand, as L2 passively stands with his right hand pinned between buttocks and wall. L1 is the active figure, with his right arm plunging behind L2's back, reaching down to grasp the light garment as it billows down to the wall's ledge. The figures are suspended between the actions of putting off the dark garment in favor of the light. In the next instant, we

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anticipate L2 to recoil to his right in an effort to complete his directed action of donning them both in the light garment. Just as L1 and L2 were once cloaked in darkness, we may conclude that they both will partake in the light.

As L1 and L2 cooperate in an orchestrated effort to put off their old garment in favor of the new, the nude triad to the picture's right offers an antonymic counterpoint (fig. 11). R2 and R3, in contrast to L1 and L2, firmly embrace one another as R2 determinedly lodges himself between the loins of R3. With his left arm, R3 braces R2 around the abdomen, with his left hand presumably projecting beyond R2's right hip, enwrapped within the wrinkled bundle of the dark garment. R3 remains decidedly draped in the dark garment, as it is slung over his left shoulder, cascading down around his torso and lap, behind R2, as it emerges out from R2's right flank. The linear contiguity from R3's left elbow, sloping gently downwards across R2's chest, terminates in the dark bundle of cloth near R2's right hip, again suggesting that R3's hand is within the bundle.

As R2 stares intensely at R1, R3 fixates upon the action that joins all three actors. With downturned concentration, R3 peers at the light garment that tautly emerges from behind the shoulder of R2. As R1 tightly grasps the light garment in his left hand, producing ripples down the light garment under tension, we may surmise that R3's right hand also grasps the light garment (behind R2's back), providing the opposite pole of resistance producing the horizontal tension in the fabric. R1 desires to fully possess the light garment for himself. To punctuate this struggle, R1 leans to his far right to supply the necessary force to free the light garment, which has already been partially donned

upon his right shoulder. R2 reflexively leans away from R1, reaffirming his current position.

Considering all the nudes in concert, we may discern a broader narrative at play. The nudes on the left embody the desire to put off the old garment in favor of the light. The trio to the right, however, evinces a more raucous drama - two polar opposites characterized by divergent attitudes in relation to the garments and one another. R1 desires the light garment, actively reclining away from his fellows; the remaining two however resist this action, reaffirming their bond in tight embrace. The nude characters within their baptismal setting are engaged in a concupiscent plot, where the conflict revolves around the putting off of sin. The garments are the visual devices that provide resolution.

<div align="center">Baptismal Garments, Sin, and Apocalyptic Language</div>

The dark garments thus represent concupiscent desire that must be put off. The light garments represent the purity of the baptismal robe cleansed in the waters of baptism that must be put on and maintained. The varied responses to the garments thus characterize the state of repentance for each nude. The leftward duo pursues the righteousness of the white robe, as does the nude protagonist (R1) at the picture's right. The love locked pair who yet remain ensconced in loinful embrace, however, represent the obstinance of will to put off concupiscent desire, remaining in the soiled garment.

According to the apocalyptic book of Revelation, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the book of Life; but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels" (Rev. 3:5). In response to

this vision, Tertullian (c. 155-240 AD) states, "We have also in the Scriptures robes mentioned as allegorizing the hope of the flesh." Oecumenius (active 990 AD) also remarks, "By the garments that have not been soiled he means the bodies of the saints," and "He who conquers the passions will wear white robes in the age to come." The Venerable Bede provides a propitious bookend by asserting, "He calls all to the imitation of those who have preserved the silken robe of baptism without blemish."[44]

The symbolic language of repentance and keeping the baptismal garment clean is the raw material of Savonarola's controversial prophetic vision expounded in his "Adoration of the Cross" sermons during Lent of 1496. The synthesized versions of these two sermons, published by Savonarola's fellow Dominican monk, Domenico Benivieni, in May 1496, graphically pictures (fig. 9) the drama of repentance worked out through the putting on and off of garments. As concupiscence stains the baptismal garment, sin must be put off in order to convert to Christ. The two figures that reach across the stream of Christ's blood, passing the garment from one to the other, synopsize this sentiment. They visually articulate the interrelatedness of concupiscence, repentance, and the baptismal robe, and stage Michelangelo's interpretation of this visual language, all within Savonarola's prophetic vision for the end of the world.

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[44] The above quotations are commentaries on Rev. 3:5, found in *Ancient Christian Commentaries on Scripture*, Revelation, ed. William C. Weinrich, vol. XII (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 41-42. For the citations in the CCSL and other sources, see ftnts. 20-22, pp. 41-42.

2.3.4 The Hemicycle: Baptismal Font and Foundation of the Church

The Hemicycle as Baptismal Font

Not only do Michelangelo's nudes bespeak the baptismal right of putting off sin

for the righteousness of the clean baptismal garment, but their environs due as well. The

semicircular low-lying wall, or hemicycle, is evocative of early Christian baptismal fonts,

where adults would be baptized by full immersion.[45] Just as John the Baptist baptized

Christ in the flowing, "living water" of the River Jordan (e.g. Matt. 3:13-17), so the Four

Rivers of Paradise (Gen. 2:10) flow from the background of the *Doni Tondo* towards the

nudes. Raphael's *Baptism of Constantine* (fig. 12) depicts the Roman Emperor's baptism

set within a large, multi-step baptismal font that approximates the font of the Baptistery

of St. John Lateran, Rome. While by the fifteenth century, baptism by infusion or

ablution (pouring over the head) was commonplace, Michelangelo nonetheless evokes

the ritual as it was administered in the remote past.[46]

The young John the Baptist punctuates the baptismal context of the middleground,

as he approaches the Holy Family from within the font. Of the figures in the

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[45] My thanks to Livio Pestilli for sharing his yet unpublished paper on the baptismal context of the *Doni Tondo*, presented at the Sixteenth Century Society's 2016 Bruges conference. See Robin M. Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 136-142. Also, Dalmasso, "*Integritas*," p. 501; Marco Frati, "Spazi di gioia. I battisteri in Toscana dalle origini al tardo Medioevo," *Monumenta. Rinascere dalle acque: spazi e forme del battesimo nella Toscana medievale*, ed. Annamaria Ducci and Marco Frati (Pisa: Cassa di Risparmio di San Miniato, 2011), 45.

[46] Annamaria Ducci, "Vasche e fonti battesimali delle pievi medievali toscane: dati, problemi, ipotesi," Monumenta. *Rinascere dalle acque: spazi e forme del battesimo nella Toscana medievale*, ed. Annamaria Ducci and Marco Frati (Pisa: Cassa di Risparmio di San Miniato, 2011), 95.

middleground, the Baptist is the only one to fixate upon Christ, for he is the voice crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" (Jn. 1:23). John is thus the interlocutor between the nudes and Holy Family – the symbol of repentance necessary to prepare for the coming of the Lord. John's presence amplifies the prophetic tenor of the middle ground's function - the putting off of sin in preparation for the end times, as inflected by Savonarola's apocalyptic vision.

The Hemicycle and Bramante's *Tempietto*

The corrugated interior surface of the hemicycle alternates between concave and convex rectangular undulations, where the elevated portions approximate the Doric columnar order. During Michelangelo's first sojourn to Rome from 1496-1501, he would have found inspiration in Bramante's revival of classical architecture exemplified by Bramante's *Tempietto* (c. 1502), the small *martyrium* commissioned by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain to commemorate the site of St. Peter's martyrdom (fig. 13).[47] The columnar system Bramante employed in the Tempietto, states Jack Freiberg, "marks the first appearance of the Doric in postclassical architecture where it is applied with a degree of refinement approaching its ancient use."[48] Doric pilasters are employed on the exterior and interior surfaces of the Tempietto's cella. The interior surface punctuated by Doric pilasters in Bramante's edifice mirror the surface treatment of Michelangelo's baptismal font.

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[47] Jack Freiberg, *Bramante's Tempietto, the Roman Renaissance, and the Spanish Crown* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 111-112.

[48] Freiberg, *Bramante's Tempietto*, 111.

Michelangelo's implementation of an abbreviated Doric order for his font may

have a deeper resonance beyond formal resemblance. The Basilica of San Pietro in

Montorio, which the Tempietto is connected, was the site of prophetic tremors in Rome

upon the opening of the *Apocalypsis Nova* in 1502, attributed to the Franciscan monk

Amadeo Meneses de Silva. Silva purported to receive revelations from the Archangel

Gabriel while praying in the grotto at the monastery, which included Savonarolan themes

such as the future perfection of the world and the union of the Western and Eastern

Churches, all in preparation for the end times.[49] This revelatory text was widely

disseminated throughout Italy upon its unsealing by Cardinal Carvajal, informal protector

of the Amadeites, between the feasts of Easter and Ascension, 1502.[50]

       After the opening of the text in 1502, the Franciscan friar and theologian, Giorgio

Benigno Salviati, shared details of the event "with a friend in Florence where prophetic

expectation remained high due to the memory of Savonarola."[51] Between 1512 and 1514,

the Spanish artist Pedro Fernández de Murcia painted a commemoration of the unsealing

of the *Apocalypsis Nova* where the Archangel Gabriel presents the revelatory text to

Amadeo amidst the heavenly hosts who populate an edifice evoking features of

Bramante's Tempietto (fig. 14). Events surrounding the opening of the *Apocalypsis Nova*

at San Pietro in Montorio charge the site of Bramante's creation with a prophetic

resonance. We may entertain the possibility that Michelangelo drew inspiration from

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[49] Ibid., 144.

[50] Ibid., 145.

[51] Ibid., 145.

Bramante's Doric system not only for its classical simplicity, but also for the

eschatological expectations associated with the location where the text was unsealed.

<center>The Hemicycle as Foundation of the Church</center>

The prophetic and apocalyptic associations we have considered in relation to the

Doni Tondo's middleground situate the baptismal context of the nudes within the

Savonarolan milieu of repentance in preparation for the end of the world. Yet the

middleground is but an intermediary passage between the picture's background and

foreground. We began our analysis of the painting's broad compositional organization by

asserting that like medieval *mappae mundi,* with their schematic visualization of salvific

time moving across space, the *Doni Tondo* also evinces a congruous internal logic. As the

background of Michelangelo's painting corresponds to the easterly Paradise (at the top of

mappae mundi), how might the middle ground thematically correspond to the middle of

mappae mundi?

The progression of salvific time, from the beginning of the world to its end, traces

across the surface of the Ebstorf world map from top (East) to bottom (West) (fig 6). In

the middle, however, we reach a prominent square enclosure representing the city of

Jerusalem. This most holy city hosted the Crucifixion of Christ and the Resurrection and

came to stand for the Heavenly Jerusalem on earth described in Revelation 21:11-12, 16

and 18. The earthly Jerusalem was conflated with the heavenly Jerusalem because

Christ's salvific work in the city inaugurated the final age of man. Jerusalem as a concept

<center>96</center>

within the stream of salvation history thus came to anticipate that which has not yet occurred – the Second Coming of Christ and the end of time.[52]

The spiritual reality of the Church founded on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) and its association with the city of Jerusalem is described in the scriptures as the foundation of a new edifice. This new edifice is Christ himself, who was rejected and crucified. According to Matthew 21:42, "Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The very stone the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'"

The baptismal actions perpetrated by the nudes, by the putting on and off of their garments, occurs within an excavated pit that not only suggests early Christian baptismal fonts, but the foundation of the church itself, the heavenly Jerusalem on earth, which was inaugurated by Christ in the city of Jerusalem, the edifice of which stands as a testimony to that which is to come at the end of the age – the Second Coming of Christ. Should we not therefore suppose that in Michelangelo's painting, Christ be depicted in the middleground within the edifice that is built of his flesh? How is that the Christ child occupies the foreground – a zone spatially and temporally removed from the nudes behind? Did not Christ's humanation presuppose, and predate, the foundation of the Church and the subsequent Christian rite of Baptism?

If the background of the *Doni Tondo* images the easterly Eden where Paradise was lost and sin entered the world - and if the middle ground of the painting articulates

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[52] For a discussion of the significance of Jerusalem in Christian eschatological thought, and the Ebstorf world map, see, Scafi, *Mapping Paradise*, 150-152.

the Savonarolan call to repentance in preparation for the end – should not the action in the foreground consummate such expectations by picturing the Resurrected Christ come again to judge the living and the dead? Instead of Christ come again, we are presented with Christ come for the first time. As expectations are inverted, the encroaching sensation of befuddlement prevails as we encounter the athletic Christ child perched near his mother's arm. Mary, in front of the apse-like middleground, is an altar of sorts. Her son above her is raised like the Eucharistic host.[53] Why the temporal disjuncture? The conundrum's solution resides within the compact figural arrangement of the Holy Family. Christ's passage between mother and father stages a profound Christological expression where the line between painting and theology is obliterated.

2.4 Foreground: The Bidirectionality of Christ and the End of the World

Responding to the Holy Family's curious figural composition in the foreground, Charles de Tolnay asserted that the figures of Mary and Joseph represent the age *sub lege* (under the law), where Christ, telescoped as it were between the two figures, represents the age *sub gratia* (under grace) – fulfillment of the law inaugurated with the Word become Flesh.[54]The most formidable interpretation of the Holy Family's function in the foreground however springs from the pen of Regina Stefaniak.

Informed by Leo Steinberg's provocative reading of Joseph as surrogate stand-in for God the Father, Stefaniak proposes two primary thrusts essential to our understanding

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[53] I thank William E. Wallace for bringing this Eucharistic connotation to my attention.

[54] Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, 165.

of the action in the foreground, both revolving around fifteenth century Josephine and Marian theology.[55] The catalyst for Stefaniak's interpretive proposal is situated in the figural relation between Mary and Joseph. Why is Mary placed between the splayed legs of the father figure behind? Stefaniak understands discourses on Josephine theology in the fifteenth century to have inspired Michelangelo to depict Joseph as the embodiment of the militarily prepared citizen of the new Florentine republic. Within this context, Mary is understood to be a *mulier fortis* (strong woman) and ideal wife, "dominated and possessed by her husband," as well as a Virgin-virago – the embodiment of feminine power in the mold of Donatello's *Judith* or Leonardo's *Saint Anne and the Virgin*.[56] Christ's role in this holy drama however is less debated.

Locating a clever turn of phrase, Steinberg suggests that Christ's role in the interchange between mother and father expresses the Italian petition *doni*, God give!, a play on words with the patron's surname, Doni. And noting Christ's two hands pressed upon Mary's head, d'Ancona suggests this gesture to be an act of blessing.[57] Overall, the position of Mary between Joseph's loins has predominated the discussion of the Holy Family's figural composition, where Christ's role is supportive in elucidating the theological profiles of his parents. The Christological profundity of the staged action, however, has yet to be fully articulated.

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[55] Steinberg, "Divine Circle," 139; Steinberg, "Animadversions," 499; Stefaniak, *Mysterium*, 9-10, 13-117. Mirella Levi d'Ancona suggests Mary's seated position directly on the ground promotes her as the Madonna of Humility, citing passages from the Old Testament. d'Ancona, "*Doni* Madonna,"44-45.

[56] Stefaniak, *Mysterium*, 10-11, 13-117.

[57] Steinberg, "Divine Circle," 139; d'Ancona, "*Doni* Madonna," 44.

2.4.1 The Ambiguity of Christ's Directionality

The compositional arrangement of Michelangelo's Holy Family is compact, requiring sustained concentration to visually disentangle the dense interplay of limbs and hands converging upon Christ (fig. 5). The elegant complexity of the figural arrangement contains within it a great compositional, and theological, mystery. Michelangelo has imbued this triad of arms, legs and hands with such astute consideration, that the implications of the action presented spills beyond the group itself into all other areas of the painting, and beyond. The essential question is what direction is Christ being passed – forward or backwards? What from the outset may seem a trivial inquiry quickly spirals into an indissoluble node of ambiguity. Since Giorgio Vasari's breezy assertion that Mary passes Christ to Joseph, the question has routinely been ignored, producing such a discordant interpretive landscape that consensus on the matter remains surprisingly unattended.[58]

Modern interpreters of the *Doni Tondo* since Vasari have commonly passed the question over in silence, providing unqualified assertions in regard to Christ's directionality. Rather than being a failure of modern interpretation, this phenomenon more likely identifies the directionality of Christ as intentionally ambiguous – a purposeful compositional act designed to express a more profound objective. Neither accident nor compositional failure, the ambiguity of Christ's directionality encourages a

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[58] "Nostra Donna, la quale, inginoc[c]hiata con amendua le gambe, ha in sulle braccia un putto a porgelo a Guiseppe che lo riceve…" Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultore e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. Rosanna Bettarini and Paola Barocchi, vol. VI (Firenze: Sansoni, 1966-1987), 22.

considered response. Most have concluded that it is Joseph who passes the Child to Mary.

Those who promote a Joseph to Mary order seem to be compelled by the sense that

Michelangelo propels the Child out towards the viewer, the viewer being the rightful

recipient of Michelangelo's figural thrust. A much smaller minority asserts, like Vasari,

that Mary is the active agent passing the Child to Joseph. A growing number of scholars,

however, have concluded that the interchange is fundamentally ambiguous.[59] Before

inquiring into the Christological implications of Christ's bidirectionality, let us analyze

the Holy Family's figural composition in earnest to confirm its ambiguity.

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[59] The following is an illustrative survey. Those who support Joseph passing Christ to Mary: Charles Heath Wilson, *Life and Works of Michelangelo Buonarroti* (London: John Murray, 1876), 61; Marcel Brion, *Michelangelo*, trans. James Whitall (New York: Greystone Press, 1940), 115; Heinrich Wölfflin, *Classic Art*, trans. Peter and Linda Murray (London: Phaidon, 1952), 43-44; Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, 165; Herbert von Einem, *Michelangelo*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London: Methuen & Co., 1973), 35; Linda Murray, *Michelangelo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 48; Robert S. Liebert, *Michelangelo: A Psychoanalytical Study of His Life and Images* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 77-78; Anthony Hughes, *Michelangelo* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 91; James Hall, *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 12; Miles J. Unger, *Michelangelo: A Life in Six Masterpieces* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 115-116; Natali, *Michelangelo*, 43. For those who support Mary passing Christ to Joseph: *Vasari, Vite*, 22; Pierluigi de Vecchi, *Michelangelo*, trans. Alexandra Campbell (New York: Henry Holt, 1992), 52; John T. Spike, *Young Michelangelo: The Path to the Sistine* (New York: Vendome Press, 2010), 44. For the growing number of scholars who acknowledge the ambiguity of Christ's directionality: Steinberg, "Divine Circle," 139; George Bull, *Michelangelo: A Biography* (London: Viking, 1995), 55; William E. Wallace, *Michelangelo: The Complete Sculpture, Painting, Architecture* 1st ed. (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin, 1998), 137. Wallace reiterates his position in his biography of the artist, stating, "The purposeful ambiguity of the action permits us to read it either way, and in so doing, we invest the composition with continuous movement." Wallace, *Michelangelo: The Artist, the Man, and His Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 67; Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance Art* 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2006), 476; Stefaniak, *Mysterium*, 10, 54.

Formal Analysis: Christ's Directionality

Mary is seated directly on the ground with legs bent beneath her at the knee. Her torso gently twists up to her right against the position of her enrobed knees, following the object of her gaze, to grasp Christ above her. The Child and his mother peer into each other's eyes, as the Madonna's left hand races across her body, terminating in a partially closed left hand positioned near the God-man's male member. This hand does not grasp his flesh, but rather draws attention to his true humanation.[60] The Virgin's right arm slips across Joseph's right knee horizontally, with her muscled forearm and hand ascending to Christ's right shoulder. The fingers of her right hand, like the left, do not actually grasp the Child, but curl inward, gently pressing against her son's back. Either the Madonna's hands recoil from just releasing the Child to his earthly father - or they are poised to open as she receives the Child and draws him to her lap.

Christ, enveloped between his two adult helpers, peers down at his mother in reciprocal adoration.[61] As his head peers down to his right, his torso twists toward the Virgin, as he presses both hands upon the crown of her head. The Child's right leg bends dramatically at the knee, as his foot rests upon the Madonna's right bicep. Christ's left leg plunges between mother and father, likely coming to rest upon Joseph's right thigh. Joseph's blue tunic is pinned beneath the Child's right foot, as Joseph's golden robe flanks Christ's right side from foot to shoulder. Do Joseph's garments envelope the Child

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[60] See Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 51.

[61] See Timothy Verdon, " '*Amor ab Abspectu*': Maria nel tondo Doni e l'Umanesimo Cristiano," *Teologia nell'età di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola-Vivens homo: Rivista teologica fiorentina* 5:2 (1994): 531-552.

because he was swaddled within them previous to being handed to the Madonna, or does Joseph open them to receive Christ's naked flesh?

Joseph's gaze, like the Virgin, is intensely focused upon Christ. His knees envelope the Madonna. His paternal presence is anchored upon his left leg, whose foot is concealed from view. Joseph's right leg projects forward towards the site of the figures' interchange, with his right foot abutting Mary's. Nestled between the Child's chest and Mary's upturned head, Joseph's left hand grasps the child under his arm, with digits pressing towards Christ's neck, and thumb tucked beneath the Child's raised left arm. Joseph's hand is the only hand in view to firmly grasp the Child. And what of Joseph's right arm and hand? Michelangelo withholds this vital aspect of visual information. We are only to imagine its function, which reasserts the ambiguity of Christ's directionality. Is Joseph passing the Child, or has he just received the fruit of Mary's womb and the Holy Spirit? The solution is intractably concealed in plain sight. Michelangelo gives us enough visual information to imagine the interchange's intended outcome, while willfully denying any conclusive resolution. Christ is suspended in liminal movement that bespeaks forward *and* backward momentum.

When Christ's bidirectionality is considered only within the spatial confines between his parents, the scope and implications of his movement remains familial – a mutual self giving between mother and father, amplifying their respective roles in salvation history. This method of understanding presumes that Christ's presence in the picture serves to illuminate the character of His parents. We may invert this presumption to beg how Mary and Joseph's positions within the figural composition serve the Christ –

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how their bidirectional interchange stages a much grander Christological statement that

interpenetrates every other aspect of the painting's illusionistic space and conceptual

program. Our assertion is that by staging Christ's movement in and out of the picture, we

may imagine Christ everywhere present, filling all things. "And God put everything

under His feet and made him head over everything for the church, which is His body, the

fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23).

When we imagine Christ passing into the furthest depths of the *Doni Tondo's*

background, and emerging out again towards the viewer, we glimpse a profound

manipulation of implied movement that empowers the figure of Christ to fulfill the

totality of time and space within Himself. By aligning the Holy Family perpendicularly to

the picture plane, Michelangelo presents a Christology of space and time catalyzed by

implied movement.[62]

2.4.2 *Mappae Mundi* and Christ's Bidirectionality: The Christ Child as Α and Ω

At the top of the Ebstorf world map, near the easterly Eden of Paradise, is a large

rectangle circumscribing the head of Christ (fig. 6). Above the head are the Greek letters

Α and Ω, which constitute the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, as well as the

phrase *primus et novissimus*, or "the first and the last" (Rev. 1:17).[63] The Ebstorf world

map is spanned by the body of Christ, with his two feet in the west (bottom), and

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[62] We can imagine the Christ child affixed to an eschatological "zip line," moving from the infinite depths of the background through the middle ground and foreground, and out of the picture plane into our space.

[63] My discussion of the Christological elements of the Ebstorf world map follow, Scafi, *Mapping Paradise*, 149-152.

outstretched hands on either side (north-south/left-right). Inscriptions near his head, hands, and feet express the meaning of Christ's embrace.

At Christ's right hand marked by the stigmata, an inscription reads "The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly" (Ps. 118:16). An inscription also supplements Christ's left hand, "He holds the earth in his hand" (Is. 40:12). And by Christ's feet in the extreme west, buttressing the order of salvation history from its beginning in the east and end in the west, an inscription reads, "Mightily to the end, sweetly ordering all things" (Wis. 8:1). As noted by Alessandro Scafi, the meaning of Christ's envelopment of the earth was that the Wisdom of God [Christ] extended from the beginning of the world to the advent of Christ (Old Testament), and from the Incarnation of Christ to the end of the world (Gospels).[64] Scafi further expounds, "Christ's global embrace points up the way God has structured salvation history between Adam's Fall and the advent of his son, and directs attention towards the end, and his son's final coming."[65]

The Ebstorf world map expresses a spatial theology where Christ is omnipresent and active in all things as salvation history unfolds across the map's surface. This visual strategy establishes Christ as the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, present in both the east (beginning) and west (end), and everywhere in between. The legibility of such a scheme is easy to grasp – it is wholly two dimensional, where all of the elements of the map's contents are plotted upon its planar surface. By depicting Christ as being

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[64] Ibid., 150.

[65] Ibid., 150-151.

"everywhere" in space at each cardinal direction, the viewer apprehends the imperative that Christ also permeates all "times."

The *Doni Tondo's* background depicts the geographical features of Paradise where sin entered the world. The middleground is a visual exercise of putting off sin in preparation for the end, inflected by Savonarola's call to repentance in the late 1490's. Here, Michelangelo displays various responses to repentance in how the nudes interact with their baptismal garments, set within a baptismal font that also evokes the foundation of the Church. The foreground of the *Doni Tondo* articulates the Incarnation of the Word, which according to the internal logic of *mappae mundi*, inaugurates the final stage before the end of the world, which is the Second Coming of Christ. Like the Ebstorf world map, Michelangelo's creation plots the succession of salvific time through space, from background to foreground. Yet the artist's Christological imperative is both more difficult to apprehend, and more profound.

Michelangelo recruits the building blocks of figural painting to express an omnipresent Christ, visually suspended in bidirectional movement, that fulfills his identity as alpha and omega – the beginning and end "sweetly ordering all things" (Wis. 8:1). Where the Ebstorf world map's Christ is schematic in its approach to such a profound Christological affirmation – Michelangelo's Christ is decidedly kinetic. The Christ child in the foreground is the typological fulfillment of Adam in the background. As sin and death entered the world with Adam, so sin was defeated through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. The nudes putting off sin through their garments actively

participate in Christ's burial and resurrection, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

Michelangelo's omnipresent Christ is achieved through implied movement – a Christ imagined traveling through space and time preparing the world for his Incarnation and Second Coming. Understood from this perspective, the function of the Holy Family's figural arrangement in the *Doni Tondo's* foreground is to situate Christ to fulfill his eschatological mission. The Madonna and Joseph, strategically aligned perpendicular to the picture plane, enable their Son's spatial and temporal identity as alpha and omega by initiating His bidirectional movement. They are the Child's figural conduits for imagined movement within the painting. But does the *Doni Tondo* actually *depict* the end of the world?

No. The "multiple times" present in the painting, activated by Christ's bidirectional movement, stop short of *depicting* the end. Michelangelo's temporal flow of salvation history terminates at the depiction of the Incarnation, as we progress from background to foreground. Yet, the implication of Christ's movement forward towards the viewer brings us to the final passage of the painting. Just as the hemicycle separates the nudes from Paradise lost, and the band of *pietra serena* separates the nudes and John the Baptist from the Holy Family – so the picture plane separates the Incarnate Christ from his Second Coming. Christ's implied movement foreword is consummated in the viewer's space, where history and lived reality will converge in Christ's return at the end of time.

2.4.3 The Painting's Proleptic Frame

In 1902 the *Doni Tondo's* original frame was reunited with the painting (fig. 15), as the painting had been installed with a rectangular frame since the eighteenth century.[66] The ornately carved frame, likely designed by Michelangelo himself, depicts important iconographic features in continuity with the origins of the picture's commission, and the themes present in the painting.[67] Interspersed amongst the vegetal motifs are satyr heads, griffins and pelicans. Importantly, three crescent moons framed by four lion heads in the upper left portion of the frame denote the Strozzi and Doni coats of arms, respectively.[68]

Most prominent on the frame's surface are the five heads carved in the round that project into the viewer's space. The lower most feminine heads may be angels or sibyls, gazing intently, not at the painting, but into the viewer's space. The two heads flanking the middle of the frame are masculine, on-looking prophets. While the right-most prophet peers at the painting, the left glances out towards the viewer. Perhaps most suggestive, however, is the head at the frame's top – a clear depiction of the adult bearded Christ peering down at the moment of his Incarnation. The interplay of the figures both

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[66] See Chiara Franceschini for an overview of the history of the painting's frame. As Franceschini notes, the original frame was removed and put in the Guardaroba of the Uffizi on 8 November 1780. Franceschini, "Limbo," 141-142, esp. ftnts. 14-15, p. 141, for the frame's bibliography.

[67] On Michelangelo's conception of the frame, see, Frida Schottmüller, "Michelangelo und das Ornament," *Jahrbuch des kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* XIX (Vienna: SD, 1928), 219-232, esp. p. 222; Margrit Lisner, "Zum Rahmen von Michelangelos Madonna Doni," *Studien zur Geschichte der europäischen Plastik: Festschrift Theodor Müller* (Munich, 1965), 167-168; Carlo L. Ragghianti, *Arte, fare e vedere dall'arte al museo* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1974), p. 48.

[68] Franceschini, "Limbo," 141, esp. ftnt. 18.

addressing the viewer and the painting suggests a continuity of space beyond the

painting's illusionistic surface. The picture plane is but a thin membrane between

'fictive' space and time, and real space and time.

It is a commonplace in Renaissance paintings for an artist to address the viewer

by painting a figure within the illusionistic space that glances out at the viewer, drawing

the onlooker into the action depicted, such as Daniele da Volterra's *Assumption of the*

Virgin (fig. 16).[69] As Michelangelo's most gifted pupil, Daniele paints his venerable

master into the right of the painting, with hand raised to the heavens and sharp eyes

addressed to those standing before the altarpiece. Yet, the fictive integrity of the picture

plane is maintained by virtue of its two-dimensionality – the illusionistic space terminates

with the painting's surface. However, the altar abutted to the painting bridges the gap and

elides with the precipice at the fresco's bottom-center. Fictive space is extended beyond

the surface of the wall by means of the altar's three-dimensional presence.

A primary function of the *Doni Tondo's* frame is to integrate the action depicted

with the real space of the viewer. The heads looking at us, and the Christ Child, are our

interlocutors – they serve to make real what we see by their beholding us, and the

painting, in our space. Given the temporal structure of Michelangelo's salvific continuum

flowing from the infinite recesses of the painting's background, out toward the picture

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[69] For instance, Leon Battista Alberti wrote: " I like there to be someone in the 'historia' who tells the spectators what is going on, and either beckons them with his hand to look, and either beckons them with his hand to look, or with ferocious expression and forbidding glance challenges them not to come near, as if he wishes their business to be secret, or points to some danger or some remarkable secret, or by his gesture invites you to laugh or weep with them." Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. Cecil Grayson (New York: Penguin, 1991), 78.

plane – as the fictive space of the picture elides with real space, so does the temporal flow of the foreground burst into 'real' time. The *Doni Tondo* is designed to project beyond itself, and its frame plays a pivotal role in achieving this phenomenon.

2.4.4 Picture Plane *as* Perpetual Present

Awaiting the end of the world is tedious business. It would be much easier for an artist to paint the Second Coming of Christ and end of time subsequent to His arrival. Yet prophecy's tension resides in the already but not yet. The power of Savonarola's prophetic preaching is that it compelled many to believe the end was nigh. By positioning Christ to be suspended in bidirectional movement perpendicular to the picture plane, Michelangelo grants us the latitude to imagine the consequences of Christ's movement within, and without the painting. We invest the Christ Child with movement at Michelangelo's compositional behest. Like the head of Christ positioned in the east in medieval *mappae mundi*, Christ's existence in the *Doni Tondo* predates the time of Paradise depicted in the painting's background. Christ is the *primus*, as St. John declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made…." (Jn. 1:1-3).

And like medieval *mappae mundi* where Christ's feet are positioned in the west at the end of space and time, Christ's existence in the *Doni Tondo* will consummate all ages upon his Second Coming, as He is also the *novissimus*. This consummation is implied but not depicted. Christ's movement towards the picture plane anticipates an event that will occur in real space, where belief elides with the eschaton. Time follows the Christ Child as we imagine him stepping down from the Madonna's shoulder and advancing towards

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us, bridging the span from the Incarnation depicted to the present 'now.'[70] As we stand before the picture plane, it represents a perpetual 'present' whose consummation at the end of the age will be fulfilled when Christ returns again in the flesh. Michelangelo's solution for depicting an event anticipated but not yet consummated is to invest his Christ with movement. We may recall Hugh of St. Victor: "In the succession of historical events the order of space and the order of time seem to be in almost complete correspondence."[71] As Christ moves, so does time, until the terminal pole of its continuum is fulfilled in the real space of the viewer.

2.5 Conclusion

Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo* bespeaks a devotional image that not only fulfills the patronal requirements of promoting the Holy Family as the human ideal within the context of Agnolo Doni and Maddalena Strozzi's marriage; it is also a painting that speaks to its time, and beyond. Like medieval *mappae mundi*, Michelangelo conceived his creation to move time through space, charting the progression of salvation history, beginning with its lapsarian origin in Eden's Paradise. Affected by the social and religious milieu instigated by the fiery preacher and prophet Girolamo Savonarola at the close of the fifteenth century, Michelangelo responded to the *frate's* call to repentance with paint.

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[70] We may also note Michelangelo's *Bruges Madonna* (1501-1504), whose Christ Child slips from his mother's lap towards the altar below, in anticipation of his sacrifice liturgically invoked in the Roman Mass of the Eucharist. The contemporaneous creation of the *Doni Tondo* and *Bruges Madonna* illumines Michelangelo's interest in the proleptic capacities of the person of Christ.

[71] "Ordo autem loci et ordo temporis fere per omnia secundum rerum gestarum seriem concurrere videntur." Hugh of St. Victor, *De arche noe*, IV.9, 111.

As the background of the *Doni Tondo* pictures the geographical features of Paradise lost, the middleground zone of the painting stages sin's response – the shedding of concupiscent predilection enacted by the putting off and on of baptismal garments. The Savonarolan inflection is most prominent here. The hemicycle is both baptismal font and foundation of the church – the theatre within which Michelangelo imbues the nude's actions with a striking resemblance to those depicted in the accompanying woodcut to Savonarola's 1496 printed sermons on the "Adoration of the Cross." As the Savonarolan imagery captures the human response to repentance through the putting on and off of garments, so the *Doni's* nudes respond in reciprocal fashion. Preparation for the end necessitates ritual cleansing. Like Jerusalem at the middle of the Ebstorf world map, the *Doni Tondo's* middleground punctuates an intermediate point in the salvific march to the eschaton.

Our advancement to the foreground in fictive time and space draws us towards a great Christological mystery. The interchange occurring within the Holy Family's figural grouping enables the Christ Child's identity as alpha and omega to be expressed by implied movement in space. Christ's bidirectional movement perpendicular to the picture plane achieves an omnipresence akin to Christ's head, hands and feet circumscribing the Ebstorf world map. Christ orchestrates all things, everywhere present in all times, bringing the end of the age with him as he advances towards our space.

The final transition of salvific history terminating in Christ's Second Coming, rather than being depicted within the frame, occurs outside of the picture in the viewer's real space. The seers carved onto the picture's frame wait in anticipation with us. The end

of the age will be consummated when the Child's forward movement towards the picture plane in fictive space and time elides with his Second Coming in the flesh in real space and time. The picture plane thus abides in the perpetual present, suspended in eschatological tension, until the illusory is made real.

And where is our Alexander? We may keep searching, for the footpath, while arduous, enlightens even if our knot's solution is glimpsed but not yet fully grasped. Michelangelo invites us into a world of wonder, anxiety, and expectation. As we stand with our wooden interlocutors, we commune with the vision of an artist who peers into the past to make the future present. We are his terminal pole, holding our place in line before an image that reaches out to enjoin paint with persons. Michelangelo whispers to wait a little longer, as we abide in the perpetual present, until the end of the world.

Chapter 3:

The *Risen Christ* as Anamnetic Presence

3.1 Introduction

When Michelangelo communed at Mass he tasted eternity. But before taste there was sight. Preceding the distribution of the bread sanctified, the corpus was raised, grasped with two hands between thumb and forefinger, for all to see. That small-unleavened disk, both sign of the age to come and true presence of Christ, consumed within itself past, present and future, transfiguring temporal nomenclature into eschatological reality. The liturgy celebrated eternal time in real time. The God-Man was made material once again, mystically enfleshed – visible. With the Elevation of the Host, before taste, there was sight.

It is not important that we believe the mystery of the mass. It is important that we take the doctrinal claims therein seriously, because they are the stuff of Michelangelo's experience and artistic imagination in relation to sacred subject matter. Accordingly, the person of Christ both manifested Himself within time, only promising to rent it at the end of the age. "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup," wrote St. Paul, "you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). The Eucharist was the ultimate expression of remembrance and anticipation, of historic action and future promise. The Eucharist was the eyeglass that drew into focus and organized time, both sacred and secular, for there was only one dominion.

The preceding supra-historical narrative draws us into a thought world which expresses the primary concerns of this chapter in relation to Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*

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(1519-21): the Eucharist and time (fig. 17). I contend that the Eucharist's ability to draw multiple "times" within itself, as expressed in the *anamnesis* prayer of the Roman Mass where Christ's saving deeds of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension are recapitulated, is precisely the inspiration Michelangelo drew upon in his conception of the *Risen Christ's* iconography and figural composition.[1]

The *Risen Christ* in the Roman Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva is Michelangelo's most temporally complex single-figure sculpture. This may come as a surprise given that the sculpture is not one of the artist's best-known works, nor has it enjoyed a consistently positive critical fortune since its creation. However, despite its uncertain critical success, the simplest questions regarding the *Risen Christ's* iconography and intent are the most difficult to address. First among them is, what is the subject? This ostensibly obvious question is *the* question that troubles our collective understanding of what Michelangelo was thinking when he sculpted the figure. The problem for us is a temporal one.

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[1] Anamnesis (Gk. ἀνάμνησις, 'memorial'). The word, which is used in the narrative of the Eucharist in the NT (1 Cor. 11:24f., Lk. 22:19), is employed by liturgists for the commemoration of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, which in most liturgies is included in the Eucharist Prayer after the Words of Institution. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., s.v. "anamnesis." The anamnesis prayer begins, "Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the blessed Passion, the Resurrection from the dead, and the glorious Ascension into heaven of Christ…"; "Unde et memores domine nos serui tui sed et plebs tua sancta eiusdem xpi filii tui domini nostri tam beate passionis nec non et ab inferis resurrectionis sed et in celos gloriose ascensionis…" This 1474 version of the *Missalis Romani* (Roman Missal) is from the *Biblioteca Ambrosiana* (*Incun.* 2024 *olim S.Q.N.* II. 14) and *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana* (*Rossiana stampati* 125), reproduced as *Missalis Romani, Editio Princeps, Mediolani Anno 1474 Prelis Mandata* (Mendoza: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 2004), 8.

While the subject of the *Risen Christ* is just that – Christ in his glorified flesh,
sculpted and polished to a preternatural finish with only minimal evidence of the bodily
harm inflicted upon him – the figure is also equipped with the *arma christi* or 'Weapons
of Christ,' including a near life-size cross, reed, rope and sponge. Christ depicted with the
Instruments of the Passion most commonly recalls the Man of Sorrows subject, which is
a pietistic visual summation of Christ's suffering, temporally associated with the Passion
narratives. Michelangelo's explicit compression of the two subjects (Passion and
Resurrection) in a single figure sculpture is highly unusual if not utterly anomalous in the
history of Medieval and Renaissance art.

As we continue to look however, our taxonomic anxiety multiplies. It has been
convincingly argued that Christ's stepping and pressing right foot references the
Ascension narrative, a bookend of sorts to the episodes of Christ's life as recorded in the
Gospels (fig. 18). A final aspect compounds our classificatory dilemma. As a matter of
reception, it seems Michelangelo's contemporaries also understood the *Risen Christ* to
embody a more obscure apocryphal narrative known as the *Domine quo vadis*. The
Apostle Peter, fleeing from imminent execution in Rome, encountered the Resurrected
Christ rushing past him into town. Peter asks, "Lord, where are you going (*Domine quo
vadis*)?" and the Lord responds "To be crucified anew!" Peter caught the hint, turned
around, and embraced the crown of martyrdom.[2]

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[2] For an extended discussion of the Ascension and *Domine quo vadis* narratives in
relation to the *Risen Christ*, see William E. Wallace, "Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*," *The
Sixteenth Century Journal* 28:4 (Winter, 1997): 1277-80; Alexander Nagel also
acknowledges the *Domine quo vadis* narrative as one mode of contemporaneous

We will address the narrative possibilities of Passion, Resurrection and Ascension in relation to the *Risen Christ* directly, but let us not miss the point. That Michelangelo intended to compress all three episodes into a single figure sculpture with minimal attributes might seem improbable - an act of interpretive overkill by the modern viewer. But what exactly does this assertion indicate? That Michelangelo strove to achieve a holistic temporal continuum in relation to the person of Christ? The prosecutorial finger, rather, points to the interpretive technologies of art history that often expect a Renaissance sculpture to depict a single moment in narrative time, to be viewed from a primary vantage point.

My hypothesis seeks to promote a unified theory capable of grappling with the temporal ambiguities of Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* in relation to its expansive subject. I argue that Michelangelo's organizing *concetto* for the sculpture is rooted in the memorial character of the anamnesis prayer of the Roman Canon of the Mass. The context of the anamnesis prayer, immediately following the consecration and Elevation of the Host, is the Eucharist. The anamnesis prayer specifically recalls Christ's saving deeds of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. The cult of the Eucharist by the sixteenth century was predominately visual, where patterns of gazing at the consecrated Host informed a Eucharistic culture predicated upon sight, not taste. The link between the episodic nature of the anamnesis prayer and *seeing* the Eucharist is thus essential.

The material aspects of the *Risen Christ* bear witness to a sculptor not only intent on synthesizing multiple narrative episodes into one single-figure object, but also a

reception of the sculpture. Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 143-44.

conscious manipulation of multiple viewing angles in relation to the sculpture. That the *Risen Christ* has not a single vantage point, but many, is an essential premise of my interpretation. When viewed from Christ's proper left side, I contend that Michelangelo intentionally obscured the cross and instruments from view in order to isolate and showcase Christ's body – a showing forth of the body (*ostentatio corporis*) with overt Eucharistic connotations (fig. 19). Thus I give extended consideration to the fluid, rounded shape of the sculpture's *base* implemented to indicate and encourage movement and multiple vantage points.

As the Eucharist is the organizing context within which Christ's saving deeds are recapitulated within the anamnesis prayer, the 'Eucharistic View' from the statue's proper left side (fig. 19) serves as a parallel visual theophany that draws into focus and organizes the memorial character of the sculpture's attributes and compositional logic. Michelangelo's singular reworking of the Risen Christ subject beckons us to envisage its contents and origins. The sculpture is designed to make the viewer move in space; it is also designed to move time.

3.2 As it Stands

3.2.1 Commission and Completion

The circumstances of the *Risen Christ's* beginnings were inauspicious from the outset, inaugurated by a false start necessitating Michelangelo to carve a second version. More difficulties followed. The transportation of the figure from the artist's Florentine workshop to Rome was slow and costly; quarrels precipitated between the patrons and Michelangelo's agents in the Eternal City regarding the sculpture's placement within the

church; and not least among the operatic annals of the statue's initial history -
Michelangelo's assistant, Pietro Urbano, nearly botched the finishing touches in Rome
just prior to the sculpture's final installation. That the project was brought to a
praiseworthy completion at all belies the fraught origins of the sculpture.

Our documentary evidence entered the annals of history in 1514, just two short
years after Michelangelo asserted himself as the greatest painter in Italy with the
completion of the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescos.[3] The contract, undersigned by Bernardo
Cenci, Mario Scapucci, Pietro Castellani and first among them, Metello Vari of the noble
Roman Porcari family, specifies that Michelangelo carve "a marble figure of Christ, life-
size, nude, standing with the cross in its arms, in such a way that seems (best) to the said
Michelangelo."[4] The expectations denoted in the contract are specific but nonetheless
invest Michelangelo with great artistic freedom to conceive and carve the figure
according to his own creative sensibilities. Such was the leeway given to the most

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[3] For the history of the commission, see Henry Thode, *Michelangelo: Kritische Untersuchungen über seine Werke*, 3 vols. (Berlin: G. Grote, 1908-1913), 2: 257-72; Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Medici Chapel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948; reprinted, 1970), 89-95, 177-82; Wolfgang Lotz, "Zu Michelangelos Christus in S. Maria sopra Minerva," *Festschrift für Herbert von Einem* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1965), 145-46; Gerda Panfosky, *Michelangelos "Christus" und sein römischerAuftraggeber*, Römische Studien der Bibliotheca Hertziana, vol. 5 (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1991), 50-75; Laura Agoston, "Michelangelo's Christ: The Dialectics of Sculpture" (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1993), 5-11; William E. Wallace, "Miscellanea Curositae Michelangelae: A Steep Tariff, a Half-Dozen Horses, and Yards of Taffeta," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994): 330-36.

[4] "una figura di marmo d'un Christo grande quanto el natural, ignudo, ritto, cor uno croce in braccio, in quell'attitudine che parrà al detto Michelagniolo…" For the contract, see Gaetano Milanesi, ed., *Le lettere di Michelangelo coi ricordi ed contratti artistici* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1875), 641.

celebrated sculptor since Donatello. Yet the stipulation for a life-size nude Christ is quite

audacious, if not totally unprecedented. The nudity of the *Risen Christ* is perhaps its most

striking characteristic, and seems to indicate Metello Vari's progressive taste, given that

the denuded Christ dispensed with all expectations of decorum.

Michelangelo commenced work on the sculpture in Florence in 1514, only to

discover a black vein as he roughed the surface of the figure's face, causing him to

abandon the block altogether.[5] As a master of dissimulatory procrastination amidst an

already overbooked commission docket, Michelangelo finally managed to have a fresh

block quarried in 1518, and proceeded to carved the second, final version. By April 1520

Michelangelo communicated to his Florentine agent and friend in Rome, Leonardo

Sellaio, that the sculpture was complete: "God be praised, I have finished the figure."[6]

The sculpture underwent a slow and expensive transferal from Florence to Rome.

Commenting on the high tariff demanded by the Roman customs office, Michelangelo's

assistant Pietro Urbano penned the clever jibe that "They wanted Christ to pay duty to

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[5] For a discussion of the first version of the *Risen Christ*, see Alessandro Parronchi, "Il primo 'Cristo Risorto per Metello Vari," *Opere giovanili di Michelangelo* (Florence: Olschiki, 1975), 2: 157-90; Irene Baldriga, "The First Version of Michelangelo's Christ for S. Maria Sopra Minerva," *The Burlington Magazine* 142:1173 (Dec., 2000): 740-45; Silvia Danesi Squarzina, "Cristo 'Uomo dei Dolori' da Savonarola a Michelangelo," Christoph Frommel and Gerhard Wolf, eds. *L'immagine di Cristo dall'archeropita all mano d'artista: Dal tardo medioevo all'età barocca* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2006), 241-67; Christoph Lutipold Frommel, "Michelangelos 'Auferstandener Christus', seine erste Version, und der junge Bernini," *Artibus et Historiae* 31:62, Konrad Oberhuber in memoriam: part II (2010): 15-34.

[6] "Dio sia laudato, haviste la figora esser finita." As Agoston notes, this letter to Sellaio is lost but is mentioned by Vari in a subsequent letter. Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*, eds., Giovanni Poggi, Paola Barocchi, and Renzo Restori (Florence: Sansoni, 1965-1983), 2: 229. Agoston, "Michelangelo's Christ," 47, ftnt 8.

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enter Rome."[7] Wasting no time, by 1520 Leonardo Sellaio and another of Michelangelo's

assistants, Federigo Frizzi, were sent ahead to Rome to oversee the arrival, finishing

touches of the sculpture and construction of a tabernacle for the *Risen Christ's* placement

within Santa Maria sopra Minerva. Frizzi was charged specifically with constructing the

tabernacle, as well as negotiations with the patrons for the sculpture's final placement.[8]

<center>Placement and Completion</center>

The question of where the figure would be placed within the church underwent

several iterations between Frizzi and Michelangelo's Roman patrons. Originally there

were discussions of placing the statue near the door which led to the cloisters, but Frizzi

deemed the location unfit due to low light and suggested the sculpture be installed against

one of the piers in the middle of the nave.[9] As Frizzi moved to finalize the design and

dimensions of the shallow tabernacle in the spring of 1520, by July of the same year a

second assistant, Pietro Urbano, was fast at work, tasked with the completion of the

unfinished aspects of the figure and the construction of a base.[10]

A letter from the renowned Venetian painter Sebastiano del Piombo to

Michelangelo dated 6 September 1521 threw the situation into turmoil given Sebastiano's

poor appraisal of Urbano's work on finishing the right foot, fingers and beard of the

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[7] *Carteggio*, 2:305. For extended documentation and commentary on the sculpture's arduous journey from Florence to Rome, see Wallace, "Miscellanea Curiositae," 330-36.

[8] *Carteggio*, 2:222.

[9] *Carteggio*, 2:222.

[10] *Carteggio*, 2:310-11.

figure. Sebastiano likened Urbano's craftsmanship to one who makes pasta, not sculpture, and concluded that the figure was placed too high on its base given that the feet were above eye level. In addition, Sebastiano criticized Urbano for his penchant for gambling, whores, and velvet shoes.[11] The Venetian suggested that Frizzi take over all provisions for completing and installing the figure within its tabernacle. Michelangelo wisely assented.[12]

Before the tabernacle could be built against a pier in the nave, however, Frizzi wrote Michelangelo with the news that the figure's placement had changed once again. Frizzi agreed with Michelangelo's patrons that the sculpture should be installed near the main altar, against a pier that supported the vault of the Capella Grande. It is uncertain if the sculpture's current location on the pilaster north of the high altar is indeed the original site of installation, given the many renovations the basilica has undergone since the sixteenth century.[13]

As Frizzi toiled to correct Urbano's sub-par finishing work, he also devised a plan to lower the figure's sight line so that viewers would be able to see Christ's feet. Retaining the original design and shape of Michelangelo's base, Frizzi carved a lower

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[11] *Carteggio*, 2:313-14.

[12] *Carteggio*, 2:317.

[13] Ibid., 2:324. For a discussion on the sculpture's original placement in relation to its current installation, see Lotz, "Zu Michelangelos Christus," 145-46; Charles de Tolany, "Il Tabernacolo per il Cristo della Minerva," *Commentari* 18 (1967): 43-47; Panofsky, *Christus*, 50-75. Agoston, "Michelangelo's Christ," 9-12. Agoston also provides a succinct bibliography of the building and renovation campaigns at Santa Maria sopra Minerva since the thirteenth century. Ibid., 48, ftnt. 18, 25.

plinth fitted to receive the original, which brought the feet to eye level and within reach as a locus point of physical touch and devotion.[14] Frizzi turned the tide. By the fall of 1521, the sculpture was brought to completion, the shallow tabernacle was constructed and finished near the high altar against its pier, and the figure was poised for its public presentation to the citizens in Rome. On 27 December 1521, in an epistolary feat of solemn bravado, Leonardo Sellaio wrote to Michelangelo: "the figure is unveiled, it pleases."[15]

Sellaio's missive to Michelangelo indicates in terse language that the sculpture was received favorably by those present at its unveiling. All of the problems that beset its production, completion and installation in Santa Maria sopra Minerva seem to have been forgotten, and were trumped by its final success. But the figure's denuded elegance and ambiguous iconography provided the crucible for generations of criticism and interpretive speculation.

3.2.2 The Dialectic of Historiography

The dialectic of the *Risen Christ's* reception and historiography is a map of sorts, our Virgil guiding us through the recorded ideas of the sculpture's audience, revealing the interpretive tendencies catalyzed by Michelangelo's founding *idea*. In fact to assert that Michelangelo's conception and execution of the figure was driven by a singular impulse to capture in stone the totality of Christ's *kerygma* (the full spectrum of Christ's life and

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[14] The projecting right foot once sported a gilt slipper to protect the marble from effusive caresses and kisses. Wallace, "*Risen Christ*," 1272; with accompanying figure (ibid., 1253).

[15] "La fighura è schoperta, e piace." *Carteggio*, 2:338.

teaching) may seem overly ambitious on behalf of the artist, if not reductive for our interpretive purposes. We should ask nonetheless, what was he thinking? More specifically, what was his subject - his conceptual guiding principle, if any? Can we know it, and by what means? Artworks that break into the world with fresh originality are difficult to classify and slippery to pin down via iconologic and iconographic inquiry. Their creativity requires the imagination of the viewer in near equal parts to the artistic imagination invested in their creation. The *Risen Christ's* composition is carefully wrought; its temporal fabric inextricably expansive.

<div align="center">Early Modern Reception</div>

The recorded early modern responses to the *Risen Christ* were aesthetic in nature. Sebastiano del Piombo memorably wrote in response to Michelangelo's latest creation: "The knees of that figure are worth all of Rome."[16] This unique panegyric is likely rooted in Piombo's admiration of Michelangelo's knowledge of anatomy and sensitive handling of the figure's musculature and internal structure. Giorgio Vasari followed suit a few decades later in his 1550 edition of the *Vite*, lauding the sculpture as "a most miraculous figure," and in the 1568 edition "a most admirable figure."[17] The next generation of artists however did not share Piombo's and Vasari's enthusiasm.

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[16] "Perchè val più e' zenochii de quella figura cha non val tutta Roma." *Carteggio*, 2:314. Translation, Wallace, "*Risen Christ*," 1251.

[17] "una figura miracolissima," and "una figura mirabilissima," respectively. Giorgio Vasari, *La vita di Michelangelo nelle redazioni del 1500 e del 1568*, ed. Paola Barrocchi, 5 vols. (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1962), 1:59.

When the master sculptor of the Baroque, Gianlorenzo Bernini, sojourned to the French court of the young King Louis XIV in the 1660's, the French nobleman and diarist Paul Fréart de Chantelou recorded many of the conversations between Bernini and those at court. According to Chantelou, Bernini communicated an interchange between Annibale Carracci and his Florentine pupil while at Santa Maria sopra Minerva. The pupil asked Annibale for his thoughts on the figure and he remarked, "*Casprita*…look well at its beauty, but to understand it thoroughly you must realize how bodies were constructed at that time."[18] Annibale seems to have denigrated the very quality that Sebastiano and Vasari so admired – Michelangelo's commitment to anatomy. Bernini expounded later in his visit at Louis XIV's court, referring to the *Risen Christ*, that although Michelangelo was a great artist he nevertheless "had more art than grace, and for that reason had not equaled the artists of antiquity: he had concerned himself chiefly with anatomy, like a surgeon."[19] Tastes change quickly, even then.

<u>Modern Reception</u>

Commentaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, like that of Annibale and Bernini's ruminations, are largely aesthetic in nature, yet more derogatory. A telling example is John Addington Symonds' important biography of Michelangelo, where he asserts, "that the Christ of the Minerva must be regarded as a mutilated

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[18] Paul Fréart de Chantelou, *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's Visit to France,* trans. Margery Corbett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 43. "*Casprita*" is a mild Italian explicative that expresses impatience. Chantelou, *Diary*, 43, ftnt. 127. Chantelou's entry is dated 28 June 1665, and follows Bernini's reminiscence, writing, "…in this way [Annibale] making fun of Michelangelo, whose style did not imitate nature." Ibid., 43.

[19] This remark dates to Chantelou's 21 August 1665 entry. Ibid., 137.

masterpiece." Romain Rolland concurred with Symonds' valuation in his biography of the artist, writing that "the Christ of the Minerva…is the coldest and dullest thing he [Michelangelo] ever did – a work…which is commonplace and uninspiring." And one of the greatest Michelangelo scholars of the twentieth century, Charles de Tolnay, bookends this sad state of affairs by concluding, "The Christ of the Minerva is one of the less outstanding works of Michelangelo."[20] The exact aesthetic quarrel these authors and many others harbor is never precisely explicated. It seems likely that Sebastiano's alarming letter to Michelangelo describing Pietro Urbano's difficulty finishing the figure is the culprit. Perhaps nothing more.[21]

In addition to concluding that the *Risen Christ* is of poor aesthetic value, many have also highlighted what they view to be the specious religious character of the figure. Nudity is the issue; how can a life-size naked Christ not simply be an excuse to carve a pagan statue in Christian guise? The reasoning behind such a cumulative assessment bespeaks as much of the interpreters as it does the artist.[22]

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[20] John Addington Symonds, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti* (New York: Carlton House, 1893; reprinted 1936), 233; Romain Rolland, trans. Fredrick Street, *Michelangelo* (New York: Duffield & Co., 1915), 58. Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Medici Chapel*, 95.

[21] See footnote 11 for Sebastiano's letter. My opinion is in agreement with Wallace, that Sebastiano's alarming letter is largely responsible for most of the aesthetic apprehensions regarding the *Risen Christ*. For an overview of the negative modern assessment of the figure, see Wallace, "*Risen Christ*," 1251, 1270-71.

[22] For a brief summary of the supposed pagan demeanor of the *Risen Christ*, see Wallace, "*Risen Christ*," 1271-72, ftnt. 13.

<u>Modern Rehabilitation?</u>

A more stimulating interpretive debate of the *Risen Christ's* iconographic meaning sprang up in the mid-twentieth century in reaction to the unusual inclusion of the *arma christi* on a resurrected Christ. One expects a Christ in his resurrected and glorified flesh to be triumphant, a *Christus victor* who conquers death by His own death. Such is what we see with Piero della Francesca's majestic fresco of Christ in the Museo Civico of Sansepulcro (fig. 20). Christ, fully frontal, addresses us with strength of poise, firmly staking the symbolic banner of the cross into the His earthly creation just liberated. The sanguine trickle running from his side is a trophy, not a cause of mourning or sorrow. The moment depicted is unambiguous; it pictures a precise and instantaneous moment in time.

Michelangelo's marble vision for the *Risen Christ* is altogether different. The "weapons of Christ" are present and prominent – reed, rope and sponge. The cross, although diminutive, is much closer to life-size than a symbolic paraclete/token. The Passion of Christ directly confronts us. Yet the body is pristine. The small incision on Christ's side and nail marks on hands and feet – signs of the crucifixion, are possibly not original; Christ's face expresses no grief, having been transfigured from glory to glory.[23] Why are such demonstrative features pointing both to Passion and Resurrection so clearly present simultaneously? Put succinctly, what is the subject?

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[23] Lotz, "Zu Michelangelos Christus," 148. Lotz argues from the perspective, which I agree, that no sixteenth reproductions of the *Risen Christ* in any media display the marks of the crucifixion. Also Agoston, "Michelangelo's Christ," 11,50.

Henry Thode proposed the *Schmerzensmannes* type or Man of Sorrows as the

Risen Christ's subject. Erwin Panofsky seconded Thode's notion to the exclusion of the

Risen Christ as subject. The examples first cited by Thode and Panofsky include

Giovanni Bellini's *The Blood of the Redeemer* in the National Gallery of London and

Vecchietta's bronze figure atop the ciborium of the main altar of Siena's Duomo (Figs.

21-22). The predominant feature Bellini's and Vecchietta's creations have in common is

that of a bodily fixation on Christ's sacrifice, Vecchietta's being the more visceral of the

two. Neither expresses the triumphant disposition of Michelangelo's Savior. Thode's and

Panofsky's positions sparked an interpretive skirmish circumscribed by the binary

question as to which subject the figure embodies: Man of Sorrows or Resurrected

Christ?[24]

Wolfgang Lotz alternatively came down on the other side of the fence, firmly

promoting the Resurrected Christ as subject, to the exclusion of the Man of Sorrows

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[24] Précis of the interpretive history of the figure: Thode, *Michelangelo*, 257-72; Erwin Panfosky, "'Imago Pietatis:' Ein Beitrag zur Typen-geschichte des 'Schmerzensmanns' und der 'Maria Mediatrix,'" *Festschrift für Max J. Friedlander zum 60. Geburtstage* (Liepzig: E. A. Seema, 1927), 261-308; Herbert von Einem, *Michelangelo*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London: Methuen, 1943), 127-130; Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Medici Chapel*, 89-95, 177; Lotz, "Zu Michelangelos Christus," 143-50; Martin Weinberger, *Michelangelo the Sculptor*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1967), 198-209; Colin Eisler, "The Golden Christ of Cortona and the Man of Sorrows," Part II, in *Art Bulletin* 51 (1969): 233-246; Alistair Smith, letter, *Art Bulletin* 52 (1970): 360; Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 18-23; Panofsky, *Michelangelos "Christus,"* 180-89; Agoston, "Michelangelo's Christ"; Wallace, *"Risen Christ,"* 1251-80; Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, "The Body as 'Vera Effigies' in Michelangelo's Art: The Minerva Christ," in Christoph Frommel and Gerhard Wolf, eds. *L'immagine di Cristo dall'archeropita all mano d'artista: Dal tardo medioevo all'età barocca* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2006), 269-321; Nagel, *Controversy*, 138-51; Squarzina, "Cristo," 241-67.

reading. Lotz's premise suggested that Michelangelo avoided the older symbolic

sacramental type (Bellini and Vecchietta, e.g.) in favor of a Resurrected Christ who

"suffers the instruments as the victory over death." What Lotz meant exactly by "suffers"

is a matter of syntax, but Michelangelo's figure certainly expresses no anguish.[25] Charles

de Tolnay and Colin Eisler, however, took the middle ground by asserting that the Risen

Christ subject is a part of the Man of Sorrows type, thus conflating the two subjects,

although the summation of Tolnay's reading is somewhat contradictory.[26]

The weakness of the conflation theory, which asserts that the Man of Sorrows and

Resurrected Christ subjects are really one in the same, is that the Man of Sorrows' visual

currency resides in Christ's mutilated body. The *arma christi* are signs that point towards

such bodily mutilation, which is intended to evoke empathy on the part of the viewer.[27]

Yet the body of Michelangelo's Christ is pristine and fully glorified. This fact, rather,

points towards the possibility that Michelangelo sought to visually present both subjects

simultaneously, while allowing both subjects to remain distinct. The difference is

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[25] "Auf die dem älteren Typus innewohnende sakramentale Symoblik wird als verzichtet," and "Christus is nicht Schmerzensmann, sondern Resurrectus, die Leidenswerkzeuge warden zu Zeichen des Sieges uber den Tod." Lotz, "Zu Michelangelos Christus," 148.

[26] "The subject is the Resurrected Christ with the Instruments of the Passion – that is, the Man of Sorrows." But then, "The subject is the Man of Sorrows." Tolany, *Michelangelo: Medici Chapel*, 91, 179, respectively. Eisler's position is more unequivocal, "By the sixteenth century, the division between the Man of Sorrows and the Christ of the Resurrection had blurred, and there is no need to view these types as mutually exclusive, since they were often thematically interrelated, if not inseparable." Eisler, "Golden Christ," 243.

[27] For a bibliography on the Man of Sorrows type, or *imago pietatis*, see, Wallace, "Risen Christ," 1275, nt. 25.

between conflation and compression. Michelangelo has programmatically compressed

the Passion and Resurrection, while not conflating their distinct connotations in relation

to their respective episodes found in the Gospels. The subjects exist simultaneously,

distinctly, and without confusion – a point we will pursue momentarily.

The inherent tension imbedded in the preceding historiographic record prompted

others to pursue alternative interpretive approaches. Leo Steinberg anchored the *Risen*

Christ within the visual tradition of emphasizing Christ's human nature by picturing the

divine member, while Gerda Panofsky promoted a typological reading of Michelangelo's

Christ as the New Adam, premised upon certain passages from the New Testament and

the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, where Christ is described in Limbo.[28] The most

promising return to the question of the *Risen Christ's* subject, however sprang from the

probing mind of a curious graduate student.

<div align="center">Intentional Ambiguity</div>

Laura Agoston initiated a deeply insightful analysis into the logic of

Michelangelo's figure, successfully asserting that the temporality of the sculpture is

simply indeterminate, positing that Michelangelo "deliberately eschews establishing a

mimetic relationship to a fixed moment in the Passion narrative."[29] Agoston describes

Michelangelo's intent as one that sought to "mediate" the Passion narrative as, "a process

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[28] Steinberg, *Sexuality of Christ*, 18-23; Panofsky, *Michelangelo's "Christus*,*"* 180-89.

[29] Agoston, "Michelangelo's Christ," 14. Agoston's argument is compelling, particularly in her comparison of the *Risen Christ* and *Laocoön*, and the difficulty of effectively representing the person of Christ in statuary. While my conclusions differ in many aspects, my thinking is indebted to her initial discussion.

of artistic conceptualization, which is complex and cannot easily be defined or delimited."[30] The force of Agoston's position culminates in her observation that the sculpture "places itself between the mental process of reading, remembering, and listening to accounts of the Passion narrative…."[31] Agoston's approach opened the door to the possibility that the ambiguity of the *Risen Christ's* iconography and temporality was intentional and meaningful.

But there was still more to discover. William E. Wallace's analysis of the *Risen Christ's* iconography is equally pressing, particularly in his identification of yet another narrative possibility regarding the figure's subject matter. The first observation comes in the form of a close analysis of the sculpture's stepping, pressing right foot. When viewed in profile from either side, a noticeable gap is present between the ground of the base and the figure's right heel (fig. 18). Furthermore, the toes firmly press against the down-sloping stony outcrop beneath, imbuing the figure with an imminent sense of movement. The motion invested in the stepping, pressing right foot is both outward and upward – Christ emerging from the tomb into our space, as well as an iconographic reference to the Ascension narrative as articulated in visual form. Examples such as Albrecht Dürer's *Ascension* woodcut and Johann Koerbeck's *The Ascension* brought forth by Wallace clearly demonstrate the residual impact of Christ's pressing foot, indexed by the footprints left behind amidst His ascent heavenwards (figs. 23-24). This compelling

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[30] Ibid., 14.

[31] Ibid., 14.

observation foregrounds the Ascension narrative as yet another constituent of the *Risen Christ's* subject matter.[32]

Ambiguity as a Species of Power

The tensions present in the modern historiographic record regarding the subject matter of Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* prompt us to consider what end the apparent ambiguity of the figure's conceptual program sought to embody. Indeed we find ourselves at an interpretive crux in how we choose to decipher the sculpture's meaning. Do we conclude that the ambiguity of the figure's subject matter - its unique ability to traverse the traditional boundaries of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension subjects, is the result of muddy thinking on Michelangelo's behalf? Or, do we encounter in such ambiguity an approach that sought to compress and synthesize multiple subjects simultaneously – an intentional transgression with a greater aim as its end? Our problem is not merely one of defining subject matter, but reconciling the multiple "times" the

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[32] For Wallace's discussion of the Ascension narrative in relation to the *Risen Christ*, see Wallace, "Risen Christ," 1276-80. As Wallace continues, a second novel discovery indicates that the *Risen Christ* was understood contemporaneously as referring to the apocryphal *Domine quo vadis* narrative where the Apostle Peter encountered the Risen Christ on the outskirts or Rome, as the Apostle was fleeing from impending martyrdom. After asking, "Lord, where are you going," Christ responds, "I go to Rome to be crucified anew." Christ then ascended, leaving footprints in the stone below, thus reasserting the resonance with Michelangelo's stepping figure. The church of the Domine Quo Vadis, or Santa Maria della Piante (Our Lady of the Footprints) commemorates the spot, where inside a gesso copy of Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* can be found. Ibid., 1277-78. Alexander Nagel cites Wallace's discussion of the *Domine quo vadis* narrative, and forwards his own reading of the *Risen Christ* as retroactively antique, stressing the profile view from the figure's proper right side in relation to antique medals, and their correspondent claim to antique authority. Nagel, *Controversy*, 138-51.

figure presents. What is the organizing principle; why did Michelangelo select the specific episodes of Passion, Resurrection and Ascension?

As proposed from the outset, I posit that the organizing principle of Michelangelo's conceptual program for the *Risen Christ* is the Eucharist itself, as celebrated in the Roman Canon of the Mass where the salvific deeds of Passion, Resurrection and Ascension are remembered and recapitulated in the anamnesis prayer. The Eucharistic overtone of the *Risen Christ* projects more than a weak presence of the sacrificial character of Christ's deeds, loosely associated with the divine corpus. Rather the Eucharist is dramatically pictured for us in the form of Christ's corporeal body when viewed from the figure's proper left side – the Eucharistic View - visually isolated from the unusual inclusion of the *arma christi* (fig. 19). The sculpture's conceptual program is ingeniously brought to bear by the figure's sagacious compositional arrangement. The context of Michelangelo's inspiration is liturgical and experiential, but the means by which the master realized his anamnetic vision demanded a total mastery and manipulation of the fundamentals of sculpting in three-dimensions: space, vantage point and movement.

3.3 Base Matters: 'Eucharistic View' & the Bacchanalian Precedent

The question of vantage point in relation to the *Risen Christ* is a contentious matter, as is Michelangelo's intended orientation of the figure in conjunction with its original niche. Without certainty as to the figure's original placement within Santa Maria sopra Minerva, it is indeed difficult to determine how Michelangelo intended the sculpture to be viewed, especially when such determinations are postulated merely on

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subjective aesthetic convictions. However, the sculpture makes its own argument

regarding intended vantage points and orientation within the niche, evinced by the very

material traces that comprise the figure's objectness. The argument for multiple vantage

points culminating in the Eucharistic View draws its momentum directly from the

internal logic of the composition itself – an elegant and self contained interplay between

the figural arrangement and its constituent attributes: the orientation of the figure within

the original marble block, the orientation of the figure to its niche, and the base.[33]

Indeed the elliptical shape of the *Risen Christ's* base, comprised of three sloping

planes, indexes an intentional compositional act that directly corresponds to the action

above (figs. 25-27). The planes of the base's shape directly specify Michelangelo's

intended viewpoints of the figure, encouraging the viewer to move and pause at each

plane in order to apprehend the full iconographic range of the sculpture's conceptual

program. The *Risen Christ's* base is our guide, revealing the artist's mind at work

conceptually and mechanically. Before we approach our analysis of the *Risen Christ*

directly, however, it is advantageous to start at the beginning. More than twenty years

before the *Risen Christ's* initial inception in 1519, Michelangelo had already cut his teeth

on a life-size figural group that demands multiple vantage points where the base is

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[33] On the importance of bases for Renaissance sculpture, see W.P. Tuckerman "Die
Sockelbildung statuarischer Werke," *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 6 (1895): 269-301;
Herbert Keutner, "Über die Enstehung und die Formen des Standbildes im Cinquecento,"
Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst 7 (1956): 138-68; Kathleen Weil-Garris, "On
Pedestals: Michelangelo's *David*, Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus*, and the Sculpture of
the Piazza della Signoria," in *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 20 (1983): 379-
415; and William E. Wallace, "Michelangelo's Rome *Pietà*: Altarpiece or Grave
Memorial?," *Verrochio and Late Quattrocento Italian Sculpture*, eds. Steven Bule, Alan
Phipps Darr, and Fiorella Superbi Giofreddi (Florence: Le Lettere, 1992), 250-55.

essential. The progenitor of the *Risen Christ's* internal logic is found in his *Bacchus*

(1497), an early work of great energy that experimented in the potentiality of open form

in space (fig. 28). While a lowly subject, for Michelangelo, base matters.

3.3.1 The *Bacchus* as Precedent for the *Risen Christ*

On 25 June 1496, Michelangelo sojourned to Rome for the first time at age

twenty-one, with letters of recommendation in tow from Pierfrancesco de' Medici.[34]

Immediately upon his arrival at the residence of the affluent Cardinal Raffaele Riario,

Michelangelo acquired a block of marble, which he intended to begin carving on 4 July

1496.[35] By July 1497, the Bacchus seems to have been finished. Ultimately dissatisfied

with the finished sculpture, Cardinal Riario rejected the *Bacchus*, and the Roman

nobleman and collector of antiquities, Jacopo Galli, purchased the sculpture and placed it

in the *cortile* of his palazzo.[36] The daring *Bacchus* had a rough start.

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[34] Milanesi, *Lettere*, 108.

[35] Ibid., 375.

[36] Tolany, *Michelangelo: Medici Chapel*, 144; and Weinberger, *Michelangelo*, 61. For a
select bibliography of the *Bacchus*, see Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Youth*
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948; reprinted 1970), 27-28, 142-45;
Weinberger, *Michelangelo*, esp. 61-63; Virginia L. Bush, "Notes on the New Installation
of Cinquecento Sculpture at the Bargello," *The Burlington Magazine* 119, no. 890 (May,
1977): 367-68, 371, 373-74; Michael Hirst, "Michelangelo in Rome: An Altar Piece and
the 'Bacchus,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 123:943 (Oct., 1981): 581-93; Ralph
Lieberman, "Regarding Michelangelo's 'Bacchus,'" *Artibus et Historiae* 22:43 (2001):
65-74; Luba Freedman, "Michelangelo's Reflections on Bacchus," in *Artibus et Historiae*
24:47 (2003): 121-35; and Erin Sutherland Minter, "Discarded Deity: The Rejection of
Michelangelo's *Bacchus* and the Artist's Response," *Renaissance Studies* 28:3 (June,
2014): 443-458.

The compositional structure of the *Bacchus* is fluid and complex, quite an accomplishment for an artist of only twenty-one years. The sculpture's current installation in the Bargello allows for circumambulation, as the figural group was conceived in the round. The *Bacchus* is best read by proceeding to the right, or counterclockwise, in the same notional direction of a written text.[37] Regardless of where one begins in relation to the sculpture, if one makes a full circle around it, one is able to synthesize all the views in one's mind, thus recognizing that the importance of multiple views is native to the sculpture's composition and narrative structure. The *Bacchus* is the first sculpture in Michelangelo's corpus where he intentionally, and fluidly, leads the viewer around the sculpture, playing upon our intuitional bodily awareness of squaring ourselves to certain planes in relation to the base.[38]

From a frontal position squared to Bacchus' torso (fig. 28), we encounter the teetering god raising his cup in jubilant intoxication, greeting his guests to the bacchanal long since underway. His left arm is slung back behind the adjacent hip, grasping an undecipherable attribute. The proper left leg is engaged, bearing the weight of Bacchus' debauchery, doubling as a visual occlusion to what lurks behind. The right leg contemplates advancement, but rests casually as if to counteract the pressing effects of

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[37] For an interesting discussion of the necessity to circumambulate the *Bacchus*, and its narrative dimensions, see Lieberman, "Bacchus," 67-74.

[38] Tolnay comments that, "Michelangelo's *Bacchus* is conceived as a garden figure which accounts for the fact that it is the only one of Michelangelo's works which can be said to have a "multiple" point of view." Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Youth*, 144. I concur with Tolnay's valuation of the *Bacchus*, but also seek to demonstrate this principle for the *Risen Christ* as well.

gravity and drink. From this position, Bacchus offers a wink through the eyelet of his glass (fig. 29). *Salute*.[39] We should also note that Michelangelo offers respite of a different kind. The rocky outcrop of the base, while modulated at the lip, forms a plane that parallels the proximal position of Bacchus' feet. The plane of the figure's torso and base elide.

The slung proper left arm and rounded edge of the base below the left foot is an invitation to advance rightward. In doing so, the intermediate view opens the composition, drawing notice to the parallel lines formed by the proper left arm and leg, enlivened by the contrasting bent limbs opposite (fig. 30). The consequence of Bacchus' revelry is all too apparent, as the figure's torso arches back, accentuating the effects of the cup's contents. As we progress we encounter our second station. Here, the tell is up (fig. 31). Bacchus is not alone; the little satyr is caught mid-nibble, gently lifting Bacchus' grapes in surety that the god has already had his fill. Here we also realize Michelangelo has accomplished a challenging task, by sculpting two figures from one block.

This view fully captures the dispositions of both figures at a single glance, and most likely represents Michelangelo's initial conception; it is no wonder then that Martin van Heemskerck chose this vantage point to sketch the figure during his Roman sojourn (fig. 32).[40] Here, the two figures juxtapose in side profile, creating a visual plane that is

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[39] Ralph Lieberman was the first to notice Bacchus peering through the eyelet of his upraised glass. Lieberman, "Bacchus," 67.

[40] Weinberger, *Michelangelo*, 63.

parallel to the flat plane of the base below. Bacchus' body and face repose in nearly pure profile, while the satyr's languid face and upper torso are squared to a pure front view. As if tempted to stop, however, Michelangelo nods further rightward, signaled by the torsion of the satyr's torso, leading us in the direction of the figure's demur leg.[41] The second intermediary view allows a closer look at the satyr, while Bacchus is in pure profile (fig. 33). The languid smile and plump belly suggest the satyr has been there for some time, as the head of Bacchus' leopard skin cascades between the legs of his unbeknownst guest. If in doubt, look at the base. Michelangelo planed the edge of the base to parallel the plane of the satyr's torso.

As we approach the group's reverse, it becomes clear that Michelangelo has gone to great effort to conceal the satyr behind Bacchus' left leg (fig. 34), ensuring that when squared to the god's torso from the front (fig. 28), the hoofed guest remains concealed. Finally, as we round the group, we come to the reverse view as seen from behind (fig. 35), punctuated by the broad flat plane of the base below. Returning to our initial view of Bacchus (fig. 28), squared to torso and base, the narrative structure of the group becomes clear. Michelangelo has devised a complex composition that unfolds successively, catalyzed by the viewer's movement in space. All of the primary and secondary views around the sculpture are paired with a flat plane at the base that corresponds to the view from each angle.

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[41] Tolnay notes, "The spiral torsion of the satyr, with the arm crossing the torso, becomes a favorite motif of Michelangelo in later works: for example: the *Madonna Doni*, the *Christ* of S. Maria sopra Minerva, the *Apollo-David* of the Bargello." Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Youth*, 144.

<u>Conceal/Reveal</u>

The lynchpin of the *Bacchus'* operative narrative logic, predicated upon the viewer's movement in space, is what we may term the 'conceal/reveal' technique. When squared frontally to the god's torso (fig. 28), the satyr is intentionally concealed from view, hidden behind Bacchus' proper left leg. As we follow the composition's lead rightwards, however - prompted by the figure's slung left arm and rearward left foot – we discover the reveal; the presence of the little satyr nibbling coyly on the god's bounty (fig. 31). The conceal/reveal technique enlivens the *Bacchus'* narrative dimension, offering integral visual information to be discovered and synthesized into one's impression of the group's broader narrative arc as we move in space. To accomplish such an ingenious effect required Michelangelo to toil over the group's composition, considering the interlocking visual harmonization between limbs, figural arrangement in space and the desired visual information available from any given vantage point. To ensure we do not miss the point, Michelangelo put the base to work; the planes of the base correspond to the group's primary views and concomitant narrative content.

The conceal/reveal technique has its roots in Hellenistic sculpture. Two prominent strategies have been identified that characterize the sculptor's intent to involve the viewer in the completion of a sculpture's narrative. Graham Zanker has termed them "supplementation" and "integration," or more broadly put by Peter Heinrich von

Blanckenhagen, "the completing beholder" (*der ergänzende betrachter*).[42] The

supplementation technique describes how the context of a sculpture requires the viewer to

"fill out" the narrative.[43] A prominent example of the supplementation approach is the

Dying Gaul in the Museo Capitolino, Vatican (fig. 36). Drawing his last breaths with

downcast head and mortal wound, the Gaul's attributes of sword and horn lay broken

about him as the tragic evidence of a battle lost (figs. 37-38). In a liminal state between

collapse and death, we stand before the Gaul as victor and instigator of his demise. We

are the culprit, informing the narrative sequence of cause and effect.[44]

Michelangelo's first wild success, the *David*, is predicated upon viewer

supplementation (fig. 39). The sculptor invites us to close the narrative circle by

imagining the preceding and proceeding action prompted by the figure's contemplative

demeanor. As Michael Cole suggests, the viewer is caught between the moments after

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[42] Zanker summarizes a lively field of interpretative approaches to Hellenistic sculpture and poetry, drawing primarily from the work of Peter Heinrich von Blackenhagen, Hugo Meyer and Henner von Hesberg. Graham Zanker, *Modes of Viewing in Hellensitic Poetry and Art* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 72-123; Peter Heinrich von Blanckenhagen, "Der ergänzende Betrachter: Bemerkungen zu einem Aspekt hellenistischer Kunst," *Wandlungen: Studien zur antiken und neueren Kunst, Ernst Homann-Wedeking gewidmet* (Waldsassen: Stiftland, 1975): 193-201; Hugo Meyer, *Der weiße und der rote Marsyas: Eine kopienkritische untersuchung*, Munchner Archäologische Studien 2 (Munich, 1987); Henner von Hesberg, "Bildsyntax und Erzälweise in der hellenistischen Flächenkunst," *Jarbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 103: 309-65.

[43] Zanker, *Modes*, 72.

[44] Zanker aptly points out that although the *Dying Gaul*, part of a larger sculptural sequence known as the small Gauls, were found without victors, it is likely the Romans who omitted them from the sculpture's original viewing context on the south wall of the Acropolis at Athens. Therefore in this specific case, viewer supplementation is most likely "a Roman innovation, not a Hellenistic one." Ibid., 77-80.

David has removed his armor to meet his foe unaided by anything other than the divine, and before he looses the destined stone to fell Goliath. David's sidelong gaze beckons the viewer to imagine the determined outcome.[45]

While supplementation may be considered a "soft" narrative technique to draw the viewer in to completing the object's narrative logic, "integration" can demand the viewer's movement in order to discover visual information vital to the sculpture's content. The viewer is thus physically integrated into the object's content. The conceal/reveal technique is a constituent of the integration approach.

The august Florentine sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti notes in his *Commentaries* the discovery of a *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* sculpture, found in a drain near the church of San Celso (between the Ponte Sant'Angelo and Medici Bank) in Rome, 1429. Although the sculpture is now lost, Ghiberti describes the work in great detail, noting that the figure's composition was lying and turned in such a way to expose both the masculine and feminine characteristics.[46] The sculpture Ghiberti describes corresponds to several extant

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[45] Cole sites 1 Samuel 17:38-40 which describes the precursor to the 'moment' the *David* expresses, just after David laid off his armor, and before he looses the stone from his sling. Cole calls the effect of evoking a broad chronological resonance in sculpture, "heterochronicity." One might note, however, that the *David*, although evoking a temporal range, nonetheless does not actually picture it. The sculpture expresses a single moment, but encourages the viewer to consider what came before, and what will come after. Utilizing Zanker's terminology, the *David* encourages viewer "supplementation." Michael Cole, *Ambitious Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 130-35.

[46] Ghiberti's description of the sleeping hermaphrodite proceeds, "La quale statua, doctrina et arte e magisterio, non è possibile con lingua potere dire la perfection d'essa. Esso era in su uno terreno vangato; in esso terreno era gitato uno pannolino; essa statua era in su detto pannolino et era svolta in modo mostrava la natura virile e la natura feminile…era senza testa…" Lorenzo Ghiberti, *I commentarii* III, I, ed. Lorenzo Bartoli (Firenze: Giunti, 1998), 108. Other examples of this type are found in the Villa Borghese,

examples of this type, such as the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* in the Terme Museum, Rome (fig. 40).

The Sleeping Hermaphrodite type is predicated upon the viewer's titillation and voyeurism, where the conceal/reveal technique is highly effective. From the rear, the viewer surveils the figure's feminine sway of the hips and supple buttocks, as well as the idealized features of the face and loosely cascading hair. Following the languid concave sweep of the figure's thighs, the tension mounts as evermore-privileged perspectives unfold until we discover what was already foreknown (fig. 41). From the rear, Hermaphrodite's male member is concealed. But after ambulatory consummation, the reveal is disclosed; she is also he.

Returning to Michelangelo's *Bacchus*, we appreciate the internal logic of Michelangelo's approach, designed to marshal the surprise factor of the reveal/conceal technique, where the concealment and revelation of vital visual information is dependent upon vantage point. The correspondent planes of the base complement the narrative program. The ingenuity of this schema is further reinforced by how Michelangelo chose to orient the figures within the original planes of the marble block. There are only two figures in the entirety of Michelangelo's sculptural corpus where the primary figure is not

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Rome, and the Louvre. For an excellent resource of ancient works known in the Renaissance, see Phyllis P. Bober and Ruth Rubenstein, *Renaissance Artists & Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources*, 2nd ed. (London: Harvey Miller, 2010). For Hermaphrodite entry, see Ibid., 141-42; For Hermaphrodite types, see Aileen Ajootian, "Hermaphroditos," *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 5, part I, 268-85; Aileen Ajootian, "The Only Happy Couple: Hermaphrodites and Gender," *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*, eds. Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow and Claire L. Lyons (London: Routledge, 1997), 220-42; John R. Clarke, *Looking at Love Making: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 49-55.

squared, and carved, from a flat plane of the original block: the *Bacchus* and *Risen Christ*.

Orientation Within the Block

By reconstructing how Michelangelo approached and carved the *Bacchus'* block and the subsequent shape of its base, we better understand how the master achieved the narrative objectives of the group's figural arrangement from the initial act of carving. The two broad planes of the base (figs. 42-43) indicate the original broad sides of the rectangular block (figs. 42-43 correspond to the obverse and reverse sides of the group). The narrow sides of the block are then discernable from the planar front edge below Bacchus' feet (fig. 44), and on the opposite, angled plane near the leopard-skin head (fig. 45).

When squared to Bacchus' chest we discover that Michelangelo approached the frontal view of Bacchus from the corner of the block (fig. 46).[47] This is a crucial observation. By orienting Bacchus' feet toward the narrow face of the block, but then twisting the upper torso towards the broad right side, the sculptor imbued the group with inherent torsion, encouraging the viewer's movement from one plane to the next while never fully squaring either figure to a broad side. Bacchus' shoulders and arms – the widest part of the figure – traverse the diagonal of the block, granting maximum space to realize the figure. The base maintains the original orientation of the block, but the figures torque within it. The group's orientation within the block is innate to the reveal/conceal

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[47] Weinberger concurs: "…the front view [squared to Bacchus' chest] is carved out of the corner of the block." Brackets mine. Weinberger, *Michelangelo*, 63.

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principle it embodies. The modulated upper lip of the base suppresses the original rectangular shape of the block, creating a more fluid contour to encourage movement around the sculpture.[48]

The internal logic of the *Bacchus'* composition and narrative approach, predicated upon the conceal/reveal technique, viewing planes established by the base, and the viewer's movement in space are all present in the *Risen Christ's* conception and execution. After abandoning the first version due to a disfiguring black vain across the figure's face, and pressed for time, Michelangelo reverted to lessons learned with the *Bacchus* some twenty years before. The sculptor refined the design principles of the *Bacchus* and brought them to their apogee in the *Risen Christ*. Comprised only of a single figure and minimal attributes, Michelangelo achieved a sophisticated approach to sculptural narrative where the artwork's content is successive, symphonic, and directly dependent upon multiple vantage points. The *Risen Christ* is a case lesson on how to evoke multiple narrative moments with only a single figure.

The *Risen Christ's* Base Correspondent to Multiple Viewpoints

From the figure's proper right side (fig. 47) we encounter Christ from a glancing angle. The body is elegantly slight, with limbs counterpoised in multidirectional equilibrium. Christ's head is turned sharply to his left, against the pull of his torso, which creates a planar relation between cheek and chest. The down sloping thrust of the figure's proper left shoulder mirrors the jaw-line above and stages the radical movement of the

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[48] The rectangular shape of the original block in relation to the group's orientation within it is so complex that Charles de Tolnay concluded: "The block had a triangular base." Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Youth*, 144.

left arm across the torso, terminating in a handful of salvific tools – reed, rope and sponge – firmly pressed against the body of the cross (fig. 48). The index finger points upwards, buttressed by the vertical position of the proper right arm enwrapped around the cross, with the second index finger pointing the way to victory above.

Christ's body and the body of the cross are compressed into a single visual field (fig. 47). With a swing of the hips, the proper right leg advances towards the frontal plane with the upper thigh and calf gently entwined against the cross. The cross, while diminutive, commands more than a symbolic presence, suspended between sign of the faith and actual instrument. The foot of the cross and reed are anchored into the rocky surface of the base and initiate the downward slope the base's floor. The right foot, with elevated heal, presses downwards following the slope below and rests upon the forward most delimitation of the figure's frontal projection in space. Christ's movement from this angle is internal to the figure, enacted by the taught rhythms of torso and limbs. While the figural composition is lively, there is no immediate sense of movement from the original confines of the marble block. The figure is in repose.

Like the *Bacchus*, the direction of Christ's gaze, the oblique angle of the torso, and the sweeping horizontality of the left arm encourage rightward movement across the body. The glancing plane of the torso and arms of the cross correspond to the base below, thus establishing a primary point of view. We are squared to one of three rounded planes that comprise the base's overall elliptical footprint.

Squared to the torso and arms of the cross from the frontal position, the figure opens up as the serpentine arrangement of Christ's composition becomes more apparent

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(fig. 49). The *arma christi* are in full view, and Christ's stepping right foot activates a sense of imminent forward motion that appeared inert from the leftward position. The spread, pressing toes of the right foot are planted directly above a notched plane at the front of the base, serving as the nodal transition from the broader planes of the base when viewed in profile from either side (fig. 50). Although the divine corpus can be fully taken in from a single glance, our relation to the figure has become more remote as Christ's rightward glance reinforces our inability to fully commune with his resurrected glory. We see more, but remain passive onlookers as the divine gaze contemplates matters other than our presence.

A conspicuous aspect from the frontal position is the presentation of the *arma christi*. The reed, rope, sponge and cross engage us directly, unlike Christ's gaze. The unusual graphic inclusion of the Instruments of the Passion is striking for a resurrected Christ whose body remains unblemished by their intended purpose. The compression of the Passion and Resurrection episodes commingle in positive tension. The resurrected body and instruments are fluidly integrated into a coherent whole compositionally, while the cumulative impact of compressing the two episodes gloss broad swaths of the Gospel narratives. The *Risen Christ's* compositional logic is seamless and compact; its temporal fabric is expansive and ostensibly ambiguous.

Michelangelo's ability to integrate the *arma christi* and cross with the figure's compositional structure is a masterly demonstration of poise and counter-poise. The figure's torso responds to Christ's profile gaze by pushing towards the cross, as the effect is doubled by the left arm's arc across the body. The hips then push rightwards,

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culminating in the left leg planted firmly to the rear. The thigh of the right leg follows

Christ's gaze but pivots at the knee, reversing the directional flow back to the cross. The

cross is Christ's vertical ballast, ever so slightly canted away from the body at the

shoulders. From the waist up, movement is imbued by the torso's twist, but remains

internal to the figure. From the waist down, however, the stepping right leg and rearward

planted left foot initiate an external movement where the figure's imminent forward

projection appears to be in transition from potential to kinetic energy.

3.3.2 'Eucharistic View'

Moving further to Christ's proper left side around the elliptical base, we arrive at

our third and final station, marked by the broad planar sweep of the base whose limits are

established by the position of the figure's feet. As one moves towards Christ's proper left

side, an astonishing phenomenon of visual occlusion occurs (fig. 51). The *arma christi*,

whose unusual inclusion so directly confronts the viewer from the frontal position, are

now mostly concealed from view. The cross is sublimated into an abstract vertical form

hardly visible above Christ's head. The Instruments of the Passion are visually

inaccessible, isolated behind the protruding left shoulder. In their absence, Michelangelo

confronts us with the true presence: *Hoc est enim corpus meum*. The emphasis

unexpectedly transitions from the Instruments to Christ himself, his body, his gaze (fig.

52). Expectations are inverted: the absence of attributes forces upon us the salvific

purpose of their presence. We are confronted with the 'Eucharistic View.'[49]

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[49] Weinberger is equally struck by the view produced by the figure's proper left side,
commenting, "Of all the features that distinguish the diagonal view [Eucharistic View] of
the statue from its main aspect [frontal view], two captivate the imagination more than

Associating the view from this angle with the Eucharist necessitates an

interpretive leap in visual logic, fostered by the anamnesis prayer of the Roman Canon of

the Mass, and historical strategies of viewing the consecrated Host. Before historically

situating the implications of what Michelangelo so curiously picture's from the *Risen*

Christ's proper left side, however, the contentious question of whether the sculpture was

meant to be seen from this vantage point at all demands a response.[50]

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others; the turning of the head towards the spectator and the sharper foreshortening of the passive mass of the cross." Brackets mine. Weinberger, however, does not engage the question of why Michelangelo orchestrated the composition in this manner. Weinberger, *Michelangelo*, 209.

[50] The matter of vantage point in relation to the *Risen Christ*, particularly from the proper left side, or Eucharistic View, is a node of perplexity and disagreement within the figure's interpretive history. For those that advocate multiple vantage points: Tolnay implies the potential for multiple vantage points, stating, "It is a true round figure like the *Bacchus* of Michelangelo's youth."; Agoston elaborates from Tolany's position, writing it is "likely that several views of the figure were possible, all around the front of Christ's body, and indeed, that such mobility on the part of the viewer constituted an intentional design principle."; Wallace agrees, rightly stating that, "Nonetheless, the figure was clearly not intended to be seen fully in the round and never from the rear," citing the figure's placement within its niche. For those that oppose multiple vantage points: Weinberger asserts, "One is inclined to believe that the principle or, rather, the only aspect was to be the front view.": Hirst concurs: "Designed for a niche, the marble Christ is very much a figure with a single [frontal] view." Brackets mine; Weil-Garris Brandt drives the position home, stating, "…as long as the sculpture was planned for a niche or aedicule, the sculptor would have had to emphasize a primary view," adding, "Nor could it have been Michelangelo's plan to make a full side view available, even to a spectator near the altar [Eucharistic View], if only because the cross and meaning of *Christ's* gesture are unintelligible from that angle." Brackets mine. Here Weil-Garris Brandt makes note of the visual occlusion of the cross and instruments from the Eucharistic View. Tolany, *Michelangelo: Medici Chapel*, 91; Agoston, "Michelangelo's Christ," 12; Wallace, "Risen Christ," 1273, nt. 20; Weinberger, *Michelangelo*, 204; Michael Hirst, *Michelangelo and His Drawings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 68; Weil-Garris Brandt. "Minerva Christ," 298.

3.3.3 Material Aspects that Demonstrate Eucharistic View

<u>The Base</u>

The material aspects of the figure itself confirm that the Eucharistic View is an intended, crucial vantage point in relation to the sculpture's iconographic program. The first corroborative aspect is the shape of the base. As demonstrated with the *Bacchus*, the *Risen Christ's* base establishes vantage points concomitant with the primary vantage points within the figure's viewing arc.[51] The elliptical shape of the sculpture's base is comprised of three broad planes, the frontal plane being the most narrow (fig. 50). And like the *Bacchus*, Michelangelo utilizes the conceal/reveal technique, in an inverse relationship for the *Risen Christ*, although both reveals occur on the proper left side of each respective figure. For the *Risen Christ*, the reveal is the Eucharistic View, in isolation from the Instruments. The *Risen Christ's* reveal is predicated upon showcasing the *arma christi* from the left and frontal vantage points, only to conceal them from the proper left side in order to isolate Christ's body. The absence of the Instruments enables the picturing of Christ's pristine body to be demonstratively revealed. From the *Bacchus* to the *Risen Christ*, Michelangelo perfected the necessary economy of means to achieve the reveal with a single figure.

<u>Degree of Finish</u>

The second corroborative aspect is the degree of finish the back of the figure evinces (fig. 53). The proper left scapula and broad side of the back is polished to perfection. The proper right scapula however was left in an unfinished, rough state, all

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[51] I utilize the term 'viewing arc' from Wallace's discussion of the *Risen Christ*. Wallace, "Risen Christ, " 1274.

the way down to the buttocks. Given the figure was conceived in relation to its niche, the unfinished right scapula clearly indicates that the figure was to be positioned with the rear of the proper right side concealed within the confines of the niche. The proper left side however corresponding to the Eucharistic View was polished to completion, indicating that the figure's flank from this angle was meant to project out from the niche, in full view. The degree to which the niche's architectural entablature would have occluded the Eucharistic view cannot be determined, but it is clear that the position of the figure would have favored the exposure of the proper left side.

Buonarroti Sketch

A third corroborative element bolsters the position that Michelangelo invested great thought regarding the Eucharistic View, in the form of a relatively obscure, rarely published sketch from the Casa Buonarroti, Florence (fig. 54). Amidst the foxing on this sheet emerges a frenetic figure sketched in *sanguine*, traversing the entire vertical span of the paper. At the top the silhouette of a head is inscribed, cascading down to the shoulders and chest in torsion. The proper left leg in profile is heavily marked, struck out, and remarked to determine its optimal position. From the composition of the body in profile, with craned neck, we can deduce that the head is facing outwards towards us. And ever so lightly, discernable only upon close inspection, we can identify the nascent beginning of the proper left arm crossing the body, in tandem with a projecting proper right leg (fig. 55). The direct gaze from the proper left side, planted left leg, stepping

right leg, and the crossing left arm all directly correspond to the *Risen Christ's* composition.[52]

It is likely the Casa Buonarroti sketch was created mid-stream, as Michelangelo had already begun working the block. The frenetic energy of the figure relates the master's efforts at discerning what aspects of the figure his chisel would strike first. In fact, drawing upon Michelangelo's working method on the *Bacchus* - as the artist began first at the corner of the block, so his approach appears to be the same for the *Risen Christ*. The Buonarroti sketch, and the position of the figure within the original block, indicates that Michelangelo began the *Risen Christ* not from the flat face, but rather the corner.

<div align="center">Orientation within the Block</div>

The orientation of Christ's figure within the original rectangular shape of the block is discernable by peering at the back plane of the base (fig. 56). The back plane of the base is the only remaining flat plane, thus indicating the original orientation of the

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[52] The attribution of this sketch in relation to a specific work by Michelangelo is disputed. Tolnay concluded that the sketch is for the *Risen Christ*, while Frederick Hartt gives provisional attribution to the Medici Chapel figures (1521-24) or the *Victory* group (1532-34). While the *Victory* does display the 'head-over-shoulder' motif, little else corresponds to the figure. The Buonarroti sketch, however, was not included in Michael Hirst's majestic work on Michelangelo's drawings, thus underscoring its current provisional status in the literature. The sketch is listed as A B, I. fol. 211 recto in Barrochi, but the corpus number inscribed on the slip at the Archivio Buonarroti is A B I, 77. fol. 210r-211v. Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Medici Chapel*, 90; Frederick Hartt, *Michelangelo Drawings* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1970), 219. Paola Barrocchi, *Michelangelo e la sua scuola: i disegni dell'Archivio Buonarroti*, Studi III (Firenze: Olschki, 1964), 48-50.

figure inside the block.[53] Additionally, the sculpture's current orientation atop its

rectangular pedestal (where the flat plane of the base is squared to the back edge of the

pedestal) roughly delimits the original the shape of the block. By reconstructing the shape

of the block in relation to the figure inside, we discover that like the *Bacchus*,

Michelangelo began carving the *Risen Christ* from the front right corner of the block (fig.

57).[54] And like the *Bacchus*, Christ's feet are positioned along the diagonal of the block,

with the shoulders traversing the opposite diagonal, thus granting maximal space to

realize the figure. As such, the vantage point of the Buonarroti sketch and the sculpture's

Eucharistic View correspond directly. The Eucharistic View was the first aspect of the

sculpture the master considered and carved. It is also from this view that the stepping,

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[53] Tolnay observed the flat back plane of the base, remarking, "The block was flat at the back, and somewhat rounded on the other sides, as can be seen from the base." Tolnay concludes the original shape of the block was rounded at the front given the base's current elliptical shape. However, I postulate that Michelangelo carved the base into its elliptical shape, altering the original shape of the block, in similar fashion to the *Bacchus'* base. Tolany, *Michelangelo: Medici Chapel*, 177.

[54] Regarding Michelangelo's initial approach at the frontal corner of the *Risen Christ's* block, Tolnay concurs, writing, "The shape of the base shows that, as in the *Bacchus*, Michelangelo began the statue not on one of the flat surfaces but at the corner of the block." Weinberger is also keen on Michelangelo's frontal approach to the block, but assumes Michelangelo began at the flat face: "…as in all other sculpture by Michelangelo, the base marks the front plane from which the sculptor approached his block and into which he concentrated his main vision of form." Weinberger curiously follows, "With only one apparent exception, the *Bacchus*, in which the problem of main and side views is unusually complex." Weinberger either failed to perceive, or was unwilling to promote the connection between Michelangelo beginning both the *Bacchus* and *Risen Christ* from the front right corner of the block. Nonetheless, I posit that like the *Bacchus* as Weinberger remarks, the problem of the *Risen Christ's* "main" [frontal according to Weinberger] and side views is equally complex, and integral, to the *Risen Christ's* conception. Ibid., 91; Weinberger, *Michelangelo*, 204, and nt. 27.

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pressing right foot – an iconographic reference to the Ascension, is most forcefully

beheld.

The material aspects of the *Risen Christ* in conjunction with the Buonarroti sketch

firmly underscore the centrality of the Eucharistic view as an integral viewing plane to

the sculpture's content and iconographic program. Michelangelo carefully considered this

vantage point in orchestration with the conceal/reveal component of the figure's narrative

structure. It is an interpretive act of inductive logic to project that the Eucharistic View is

just that – a showcasing of Christ's body with direct Eucharistic connotations. The

iconographic features of Passion, Resurrection and Ascension lead in this direction, for

their episodic interrelatedness is bound within the Eucharistic context of the anamnesis

prayer. With the Eucharistic View, Michelangelo activates a mode of gazing at the body

of Christ deeply embedded in the medieval and early modern cult of the eucharist itself –

a cult predicated primarily upon sight, not taste.

3.4 Seeing the Eucharist in Liturgy & Art

By the sixteenth century, the cult of the Eucharist was primarily a visual one - a

culture of looking. Most of the lay faithful communed only once a year, on Easter, the

most sacred day of obligation in the liturgical calendar.[55] For the remainder, the Eucharist

was the locus point of visual worship, or "sacramental viewing" – a concept we will

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[55] With the introduction of the Elevation of the Host into the Canon of the Mass since the end of the twelfth century, communicants became evermore apprehensive to partake of the eucharist given an increased since of awe, and danger, of partaking of the Eucharist in an unrepentant state. William R. Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1989), 122; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 73; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 95.

elaborate shortly.[56] By the late twelfth century the Elevation of the Host, which marked

the moment of consecration in the Roman Canon of the Mass, took on magical

dimensions where those present witnessed the transubstantiation of bread and wine into

the body and blood, making Christ fully present. The display of the consecrated Host in

monstrances (from the Latin *monstrare*, "to show") crafted from precious metals also

provided an avenue of Eucharistic worship, where by the thirteenth century, God could

be gazed upon within the monstrance's little glass chamber (fig. 58). Equally important

was the development of the feast of Corpus Christi (the Body of Christ) in the thirteenth

century, where the consecrated Host was processed with the utmost ritual gravitas

throughout each parish.[57]

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[56] Rubin, *Corpus*, 63; or as Ann Astell states, "A devout, intent gazing upon the consecrated Host at its elevation during mass was often regarded as a substitute for the sacramental consumption of the Eucharist." Ann W. Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3. On this point also see, Crockett, *Eucharist*, 122; Duffy, *Stripping*, 95.

[57] For the development and use of monstrances in extra-liturgical environments, see Rubin, *Corpus*, 290-91; and Yrjö Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine: A Study of Poetry and Art of the Catholic Church* (Boston: Beacon Hill, 1957), 137-150. For a shortlist summary of Eucharistic culture in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, see: Hirn, *Sacred Shrine*; Astell, *Eating Beauty*; Richard Trexler, "Economic, Political and Religious Effects of the Papal Interdict on Florence." PhD thesis, J.W. Goethe University, 1964, 177-26; Gerhart B. Ladner, *Images and Ideas in the Middle Ages: Selected Studies in History and Art* (Roma: Edizione di storia e letteratura, 1983), 233-40; Ronald C.D. Jasper and Geoffrey J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1987); Crockett, *Eucharist*; Rubin, *Corpus*; Duffy, *Stripping*, 91-130; Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J., *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 61-78; Owen F. Cummings, *Eucharistic Doctors: A Theological History* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005; Astell, *Eating Beauty*; Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, *The Eucharistic Pamphlets of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*, trans. Amy N. Burnett (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2011).

The beholder's visual gaze at the consecrated Host was the primary theater of interaction between the miracle of the mass and lay people, and grounds the pretense of the Eucharist's picturing in art. The drama of the Elevation of the Host during mass represents the zenith of early modern religious life. By the fifteenth century, the Elevation had become native to liturgical experience, and its profundity was deeply anchored in the recitation of the "Institution Narrative" in the Roman Canon of Eucharistic prayers, whereby the transubstantiation of the gifts occurred.[58] The anamnesis prayer directly followed the consecration of the Gifts, memorializing the salvific deeds of Christ, in turn providing an episodic structure to contextualize the eschatological character of Christ's sacrifice. A summary exposition of the Roman Canon's structure and specific contents therefore will ground the position that Michelangelo's anamnetic vision for the *Risen Christ* draws upon the intimate relation between seeing the Eucharist in liturgy, viewing the *Risen Christ* from the Eucharistic View, and recalling Christ's deeds of Passion, Resurrection and Ascension (anamnesis). Michelangelo's figure strikes an iconographic parallel to the liturgical sequence of Elevation and anamnesis in the performance of the mass.

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[58] The doctrine of Transubstantiation is "A western theology of the eucharist, adopted at the Fourth Lateran Council (Canon 1) in which, using Aristotelian categories, the substance of the elements (bread and wine) is replaced by the substance of Christ at the words of institution (Lk. 22:19-20) while the accidents of the elements persist." *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, s.v. "transubstantiation."

3.4.1 Structure of the Roman Canon: Consecration, Elevation & Anamnesis

The mass begins with a litany of antiphons (call and response between priests and laity) and supplications. This build up of incantations stages the Roman Canon, or Eucharistic prayers, which liturgically prepares the Consecration of the Host at the Institution Narrative.[59] The Institution Narrative marks the moment of consecration, where the Host was then elevated by the priest in both hands, with thumb and forefinger, above his head. The Institution Narrative, drawn from the Gospels (and 1 Corinthians 11:24-25) at Christ's "last supper" with his Apostles, proceeds:

> Who the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands and having raised His eyes to heaven, unto you O God, His Father almighty, giving thanks to you, blessed, broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, take you all and eat of this: *For this is my body* (*Hoc est enim corpus meum*).[60]

Immediately after reciting "*Hoc est enim corpus meum*," the priest raised the now consecrated Host for all to see. The "sacring" bell was rung, candles lit, incense burned as

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[59] The Canon, or Eucharistic prayers begin with the priest's recitation of the 1. *Vere dignum* (It is truly fitting and right…), then proceeds with the following prayers typically denoted by each prayer's latin beginning: 2. *Te igitur* (Thee, therefore most merciful Father…); 3. *Memento Domine* (Remember, Lord…); 4. *Communicantes* (In communion…); 5. *Hanc igitur* (Therefore, Lord…); 6. *Quam oblationem* (Be pleased, O God…); 7. **Qui Pridie* [Institution Narrative – moment of consecration]; 8. **Unde et memores* [anamnesis]; 9. *Supra que* (Be pleased…); Post consecration prayers: 10. *Supplices te* (In humble prayer…); 11. *Memento etiam* (Remember also…); 12. *Nobis quoque* (To us, also…); 13. *Per quem* (Through whom…); Then priest ends the Canon with the doxology: *Per ipsum* (Through him…). For an overview of the Canon, see Jasper and Cuming, *Prayers of Eucharist*, 163-66.

[60] "Qui pridie quam pateretur accepit panem in sanctas ac uenerabiles manus suas et eleuatis oculis in celum ad te deum patrem suum omnipotentem tibi gratias agens bene dixit fregit deditique discipulis suis dicens accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes: Hoc est enim corpus meum." *Missalis Romani*, 8.

the people, kneeling in supplication, gazed upon the true presence of Christ in the species

of that small-unleavened disk. The Elevation marks the apogee of the mass.[61]

After the consecration of the wine, which was performatively much less important

than the consecration of the bread, the anamnesis prayer was then recited by the priest

immediately following the miracle of the Host.[62] The anamnesis prayer, in response to

Christ's command to "do this in remembrance of me" proclaimed:

> Therefore O Lord as we celebrate the memorial of the blessed Passion,
> Resurrection from the dead, and the glorious Ascension into heaven of Christ,
> your Son, our Lord, we your servants and your holy people offer to your glorious
> majesty from the gifts that you have given us, the pure victim, the holy victim, the
> spotless victim, the holy bread of eternal life and the chalice of everlasting
> salvation.[63]

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[61] As Duffy asserts, "…seeing the Host became the high point of lay experience of the
Mass." Duffy, *Stripping*, 96.

[62] Rubin notes that after the consecration of the bread, Christ was then already present in
both species (bread and wine), citing Peter of Poitier's accepted position that even after
one consecration was complete, the body was full in flesh and blood. Rubin, *Corpus*, 55.
For an historical overview of the development of the Roman liturgy, especially the
Eucharist and anamnesis prayer, see: Joseph Jungmann, S.J., *The Mass of the Roman
Rite: Its Origins and Development*, vol. 2 of 2, trans. Francis A. Brunner (New York:
Benziner Brothers, 1955), 207-26; Pius Parsch, *The Liturgy of the Mass*, trans. H.E.
Winstone, 3rd ed. (London: Herder Publications, 1961), 195-257; Hans Lietzmann, *Mass
and the Lord's Supper: A Study in the History of the Liturgy*, trans. Dorothea H.G. Reeve
(Leiden: Brill, 1979), 41-55; Richard W. Pfaff, *Medieval Latin Liturgy: A Select
Bibliography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Enrico Mazza, *The Origin of
the Rite and the Development of its Interpretation*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connel
(Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 195-97, 290-91.

[63] "Unde et memores domine nos serui tui sed et plebs tua sancta eiusdem xpi filii tui
domini nostri tam beate passionis nec non et ab inferis resurrectionis sed et in celos
gloriose ascensionis offerimus preclare maiestati tue de tuis donis ac datis hostium puram
hostium sanctam hostium imaculatam panem sanctum uite eterne et calicem salutis
perpatue." *Missalis Romani*, 8.

Thus the link between Christ's presence visible in the consecrated Host and the saving deeds of Passion, Resurrection and Ascension are drawn together into one tightly knit liturgical expression where the anamnesis prayer directly contextualizes the preceding Institution Narrative. The anamnesis prayer imbues contextual verve to the complex temporal dimensions of Christ's work, as experienced in relation to seeing the body of Christ. Accordingly, the anamnesis prayer synoptically recapitulates Christ's historic deeds of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension in order to make their salvific implications present at every celebration of the Eucharist. The True Presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist organizes time, catapulting the historic past into present action. The Eucharist orders within itself the historic work of Christ, making the kingdom of God mystically present until His Second Coming. Remembrance, presence and anticipation are drawn into a densely indissoluble locus point of matter accessible to sight, taste and touch – that small-unleavened disk of the Eucharist. The link between seeing Christ's body and anamnesis is thus intrinsic to the lay experience of the mass in the sixteenth century.

3.4.2 Beyond Mass: Cultural Strategies of Seeing the Eucharist

"Prayer primers" or personal prayers to be said at mass or in the home constituted its own industry in the medium of print, and the prayers prescribed to be recited at the Elevation of the Host provide a cutting example of how intimately seeing Christ's body was understood within the context of anamnesis. As the medieval English prayer expresses:

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Then shal thou do reverence
to ihesu christ awen presence,
That may lese alle baleful bandes;
knelande holde up bothe thi hands,
And so tho leuacioun thou behalde,
for that is he that iudas salde,
and sithen was scourged & don on rode,
And for mankynde there shad his blode,
And dyed & ros & went to heun,
And yit shal come to deme vs euen,
Ilk mon aftur he has done,
That same es he thou lokes opone.[64]

This rustic prayer situates the Elevation of the Host, "to ihesu crist awen presence," and, "That same es he thou lokes opone," firmly within the anamnetic character of the liturgical action: "And dyed & ros & went to heuen,"; Passion (dyed), Resurrection (ros), and Ascension (went to heuen).

The awe and mystery of seeing the Host prompted many to dash from church to church, hoping to see as many Elevations as possible, daily.[65] The citizenry of Michelangelo's native Florence, during the period of Interdict levied upon all its citizens by Pope Gregory XI from 1376-78, were incensed at the papal move that prohibited celebration of the mass, as well as visual access to the consecrated Host in any form.[66] The Florentine Chronicler Stefani described scenarios where people attempted to steal a

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[64] Thomas F. Simmons, ed. *The Lay Folk's Mass Book* (London: Trübner & Co., 1879), 38. Cited from Duffy, *Stripping*, 91.

[65] Ibid., 98-101.

[66] Pope Gregory XI imposed the interdict due to Florentine opposition elements within the Papal States loyal to the increasing Ghibelline disposition of the Florentine Republic. Richard Trexler, *The Spiritual Power: Republican Florence under Interdict* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 4, 289.

glimpse of the Host in open chapels and through holes in church walls.[67] Such curious

behavior is and attestation to the centrality of seeing the Eucharist in late medieval

culture.

3.4.3 Seeing the Eucharist in Art

There is a very substantial legacy of depicting the Eucharist in print and paint,

particularly at the moment of Elevation. The most common type presents a single

moment frozen in time as the celebrant holds up the consecrated gifts – a direct visual

depiction of the phenomenon experienced in the mass.[68] Two salient examples of this

type are Rogier van der Weyden's *Seven Sacraments* triptych (1445-50) and Raphael's

Mass at Bolsena fresco (1512-14) in the Vatican *Stanze*.

<div align="center">Rogier van der Weyden</div>

The central panel of Rogier's triptych presents Christ hung atop a slender,

elongated cross, with those present below reacting in various degrees of anguish to the

mournful action above (figs. 59-60). Placing each sacrament-scene inside a cathedral

encourages the viewer to imagine the events unfolding in the present tense. Behind the

cross, the priest's upstretched Elevation in the background mirrors Christ's verticality.

With the consecrated Host in hand, the scroll above cites the liturgical form, *Hoc est*

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[67] Rubin, *Corpus*, 289-90.

[68] For an analysis of depictions of the Eucharist in art, see Ann Eljenholm Nichols, *Seeable Signs: The Iconography of the Seven Sacraments*, 1350-1544 (Rochester: Boydell Press, 1994), 241-259; Maurice B. McNamee, S.J., *Vested Angels: Eucharistic Allusions in Early Netherlandish Paintings* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998); Kristen Van Ausdall, "Art and Eucharist in the Late Middle Ages," *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages*, eds. Christopher Levy, Gary Macy and Kristen Van Ausdall (Leidend: Brill, 2012); 541-618.

corpus meum, thus cementing Christ's historical sacrifice with the ritual sacrifice performed at each mass.[69]

Raphael

Raphael's fresco of the *Mass at Bolsena*, which commemorates a "Host-miracle" in 1263 where the consecrated species issued forth blood onto the unbelieving celebrant's altar-cloth, also underscores the claim of True Presence (figs. 61-62). The befuddled priest who disbelieved the doctrine of Transubstantiation is confronted with a bleeding Host. His co-celebrant (portrait of the fresco's patron, Pope Julius II) across the altar to the right remains undaunted, secure in faith and the Church's teaching amidst the spectacular miracle unfolding before them.[70]

Synthesis

Both paintings depict the Eucharist in its material form, Rogier's example making a double claim to True Presence by positioning Christ on the cross in the foreground. However, the episodic content of each does not address the subject of Risen Christ. Raphael's painting, of which Michelangelo was well aware, is a true history painting depicting a purported historic event as if the viewer were present. Its temporal fabric is

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[69] For Rogier van der Weyden's *Seven Sacraments* triptych, see, Erwin Panosky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 282-285; Barbara G. Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Paintin*g (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Craig Harbison, "Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting," *Simiolus* 15:2 (1985): 87-118.

[70] For Raphael's *Stanze*, see, John Shearman, "The Vatican Stanze: Functions and Decoration," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 57 (1971): 367-472; Ernst Gombrich, "Raphael's *Stanze della Segnatura* and the Nature of its Symbolism," in *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1972), 85-101; Ingrid D. Rowland, "The Vatican Stanze," *The Cambridge Companion to Raphael*, ed. Marcia B. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95-119.

uniform. Rogier's masterpiece, however, elides past and present by placing the action of

the crucifixion in the foreground of a church, juxtaposed to the celebration of the liturgy

in the background, both of which are ostensibly occurring simultaneously. This is a

convincing instance of continuous narrative. We know both actions are temporally

disparate - but we accept the visual scheme given the greater claim it achieves – Christ's

True Presence in the Eucharist.

While Raphael's and Rogier's creations depict the Eucharist, they are of a

different order than Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*. The temporal fabric of Michelangelo's

resurrected Christ subject also doubles simultaneously as a claim to True Presence,

especially when gazed upon from the Eucharistic View. Michelangelo's innovation was

to integrate all of the iconographic claims the sculpture makes, using only one figure and

the *arma christi*. As we have discovered, the premise of compressing multiple narrative

episodes into a single figure is dependent upon multiple vantage points – an artistic

opportunity best suited for sculpture. But there is an intermediary category of examples in

painting that depicts the Risen Christ subject and Eucharist in tandem. The simultaneous

conflation of the Risen Christ subject and literal depiction of the Eucharist thus advances

us a step closer to Michelangelo's vision for his figure, foregrounding his achievement in

the final analysis.

3.4.4 The Double Claim: Simultaneous Picturing of the Risen Christ and Eucharist in Art

Fra Bartolommeo's *Salvator Mundi* (1516) and Raphael's *Disputa* fresco (1509-

1510, directly across from the *School of Athens* fresco in the Stanza della Segnatura) both

make a double claim to Christ's true presence in the Eucharist with the Risen Christ

subject expressed in tandem with depictions of the Host, thus establishing a concrete iconographic relation between the Risen Christ and the Eucharist.

<div align="center">Fra Bartolomeo</div>

Fra Bartolomeo, a native Florentine and Dominican monk, was a painter of the first order. The *Salvator Mundi* (Saviour of the World), originally painted for an altar in Santissima Annunziata, Florence, depicts the Risen Christ atop an altar, flanked by the four Evangelists (fig. 63). Below Christ's feet are a paten and chalice – a direct reference to the Eucharist, which rests atop a landscape tondo supported by two putti. The structural clarity of the *frate's* composition is striking. Christ's billowing garment and confident contrapposto bespeak victory, not sorrow. Christ's vertical axis grounds the composition, and creates a direct visual link with the Gifts below. Fra Bartolomeo's agenda is clear; the resurrected Christ atop the altar is of exactly the same substance as the chalice and paten's contents – the divine Body and Blood. This double attestation of the True Presence – the figure of the Risen Christ and depiction of the Gifts – demonstrates a theological point that can only be perceived by the spiritual senses when the communicant receives communion in the form of bread and wine. The two Evangelists to Christ's right punctuate the claim made in the painting's central vertical axis. Looking at one another, the younger Evangelist points upwards to Christ as the older simultaneously points to the Eucharist. They assert that the substance of the Risen Lord and Eucharist are one and the same.[71]

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[71] For a lively analysis of Fra Bartolommeo's *Salvator Mundi*, see, Nagel, *Controversy*, 89-94, 138-39.

Michelangelo and Fra Bartolommeo crossed paths in Florence sometime between July 1516 and Fra Bartolommeo's death in October 1517, where Bartolommeo sketched a portrait of his Florentine compatriot. And as Alexander Nagel suggests, not only was Michelangelo likely familiar with the *Salvator Mundi*, but he may have also taken cue from one of Bartolommeo's figural sketches for the painting just as the sculptor's ideas were gestating for the second and final version of the *Risen Christ* in Santa Maria sopra Minerva (fig. 64).[72] The little figure at the bottom right corner of the page leans on his cross with legs crossed, a more than vague reminiscence of the sculptural figure Michelangelo would realize in 1519-20. Picturing the Eucharist in relation to the Risen Christ subject was on Michelangelo's mind.

Before Michelangelo's encounter with Fra Bartolommeo, he would have seen another work of acute theological acumen and immense creative energy: Raphael's *Disputa* (1509-10) (fig. 65). Michelangelo and Raphael were duly engaged in two of the most significant fresco cycles in Western art, as Michelangelo's work on the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes (1508-12) overlapped with Raphael's exposition in the Stanze della Segnatura, just across the Vatican. The *Disputa* is the theological counterpart to the philosophically oriented *School of Athens* fresco directly across the stanza.

<u>Raphael: *Disputa*</u>

The *Disputa*, or *Disputation of the Sacrament* is a theological summa in visual form. The Holy Trinity is arranged upon a vertical axis with God the Father at the top, the Resurrected Christ enthroned in glory just below (flanked by the Virgin and John the

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[72] Ibid., 139.

Baptist) and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove amidst a sunburst, descending upon the

consecrated Host positioned within an elegant monstrance atop the altar. Angels attend

the Father at the uppermost register, with prophets and saints flanking Christ. Lateral to

the Holy Spirit are the four Gospels. Below in the lowest register, flanking both sides of

the altar, are a host of Doctors, saints and other dignitaries debating the nature of the

Eucharist at the center. While the fresco's program is thematically complex and much

debated, our interest resides in the forceful double attestation of the True Presence,

articulated via the polar vertical axis established by the Host and the Resurrected Christ

enthroned above.[73] This polar effect along the vertical axis is significantly heightened in

situ (fig. 66). The relation of the resurrected Christ to the Eucharist below makes the

same claim as Bartolommeo's *Salvator Mundi* – the figural presence of Christ and the

Eucharist are of identical substance. The host itself reiterates the claim; pressed upon its

surface is a relief of the Crucifixion (figs. 67-68).

From Rogier van der Weyden's *Seven Sacraments* altarpiece, to Fra

Bartolommeo's *Salvator Mundi* and Raphael's *Mass at Bolsena* and *Disputa,* one

thematic concern throughout of pressing import to our understanding of Michelangelo's

Risen Christ is the objective in each of these paintings to make a double claim to the True

Presence of the Eucharist. The figural, historic Christ accompanies the Host in the form

of bread and wine (in the case of the *Mass at Bolsena*, the figure of Christ is not present –

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[73] For a sensitive treatment and interpretation of the *Disputa*, see, Christiane L. Joost-Gaugier, *Raphael's Stanza della Segnatura: Meaning and Invention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 65-80, and nt. 2, p.200, for a historiographic overview of the fresco's interpretation.

rather Christ's blood issues forth from the Host). These artworks wage a theological argument in visual form that seeks to aid the viewer's belief that the Host really is the true body and blood. A direct analogue is struck between Christ's historic body, and the Eucharist.

3.4.5 Look and Believe: *substantia* & *accidens*

The artist's realization of the necessity to make this double claim springs from the simple fact that the Eucharist itself does not *look* like the historic body of Christ. The mystical paradox of Transubstantiation resides at the heart of the problem. Drawing upon the Aristotelian philosophy of Categories, St. Thomas Aquinas formulated the authoritative exegesis on Transubstantiation in the thirteenth century by making the distinction between substance (*substantia*) and accidents (*accidens*) in relation to the Eucharist. Substance is the metaphysical affirmation of being, but is not necessarily dependent upon appearance, for example. Accidents however correspond to quantity, color, place, etc. but do not necessarily address the "beingness" of a thing (*res*).[74] Therefore, Aquinas' formulation in its simplest explication relating to Transubstantiation is that the *substantia* of the bread and wine is transformed into the true, historic, *substantia* of the Body and Blood of Christ; the *accidens* of the bread and wine however maintain their natural, outward appearance. The "double claim" techniques in our artistic examples make the same claim visually. Picturing the historic body of Christ with the Eucharist reinforces the true and identical *substantia* of each. As Edward J. Kilmartin remarks, "…there is a twofold sacrament, and a twofold thing is signified. The visible

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[74] *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, s.v. "Transubstantiation."

sacrament [Host] signifies the invisible *res*: the eucharistic body and blood; the invisible

eucharistic body and blood signify the historical and glorified body of Christ."[75]

<div align="center">Singular Claim</div>

Michelangelo's *Risen Christ*, however, does not make a double claim. He does

not visually supplement the viewer with the *accidens* of the Host – bread and wine. The

sculpture's claim is singular, particularly when viewed from the Eucharistic View

vantage point (fig. 19). From the Eucharistic view, Michelangelo occludes the unusual

inclusion of the *arma christi* from our visual field to showcase Christ's historic body.

This is his Eucharistic claim. The historic body itself pictures for us what the Eucharist

purports to be. The *substantia* and *accidens* from this vantage point are identical.

The *Risen Christ's* Eucharistic content organizes the constituent iconographic

features the figure presents – Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension – within the

anamnetic context of the Roman Canon. In the fifteenth century, the cult of the Eucharist

was visual, where patterns of gazing at the consecrated Host in liturgy and art provided

the context for Michelangelo to exploit the possibilities of sculpting his figure to be

viewed from multiple angles. The 'reveal' of the figure's Eucharistic View activates a

mode of looking particular to the cultic norms of his time. The absence of the *arma

christi* press the viewer to behold Christ's claim at the Last Supper, recapitulated in the

Roman Canon at the Institution Narrative: *Hoc est enim corpus meum*. The economy of

means by which Michelangelo accomplished this effect with only a single figure is

astounding.

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[75] Kilmartin, *Eucharist*, 62.

While the Eucharist is the thematic principle that unifies the sculpture's iconographic program within the context of anamnesis, a final compositional aspect warrants consideration regarding how the master activates the temporal continuum the *Risen Christ* embodies. The movement of Christ's stepping right leg imbues the figure with imminent motion, particularly when viewed from the frontal position. The functions of the *Risen Christ's* stepping leg evokes the Ascension narrative, and serves to occlude the foot and lower body of the cross from view when the figure is seen from the Eucharistic View, given that the leg wraps around the cross and plants its right heel at the cross' base. But we may consider a third function of the stepping leg in relation to the etymological understanding of the Feast of the Resurrection – *Pascha*. Imbedded within the specific typological language used to describe the Feast of the Resurrection resides an "action word" that illuminates Michelangelo's strategy to make his *Risen Christ* "move."

3.5 Time, Eucharist & the Stepping Leg

The celebration of the Eucharist at each mass is a celebration of Christ's resurrection – the zenith of which occurs in the Church's liturgical year at the Feast of the Resurrection, or Easter. The Latin term for the Feast of the Resurrection is *Phase* or *Pascha*, meaning "Passover." Imbedded in the typological usage of the term *Pascha* for the Feast of the Resurrection is a densely packed theological meaning that relates Christ's Resurrection to the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt recorded in the book of Exodus, also known as the Passover. Christian theology since the Gospels has asserted that Christ's Resurrection is the fulfillment of the Old Testament type. The doctrine of the True Presence in the Eucharist therefore envisages Christ's presence in the Holy Gifts as

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the final *Pascha*, where humanity's bondage to sin is liberated by Christ's victory over death. With its stepping leg, Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* evokes a motile action inherent to discourses on the Eucharist since the Patristic Period.

3.5.1 Typology: The Resurrection as Passover

According to the book of Exodus, Moses instructed the Israelites held in bondage in Egypt to mark the doorposts of their dwellings with the blood of a spotless lamb (Ex. 12:1-12). The blood of the lamb distinguished the people of God from the Egyptians, thus when the Lord "passed over" the land of Egypt in the night, the first-born son of each family would be spared if the doorpost was marked according to Moses' prescription, for "…it is the Lord's Passover" (Ex. 12:11).

In the Christian New Testament, the Prophet John the Baptist, upon seeing Jesus coming toward him, exclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29). Jesus was thus understood to be the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God), whose death on the cross and resurrection would liberate humanity from the bonds of sin through his willing blood sacrifice. Thus according to the Apostle Paul, "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Problems arose from the outset for the Latin Church Fathers regarding how to translate the word "Passover" from the original languages of the Scriptures (Greek and Hebrew) into Latin. In order to maintain the typological connection between the Hebrew Passover and Christ's Passover (i.e. the Resurrection) the translation, and therefore meaning of the word itself, was of paramount importance. St. Jerome (c. 347 – 420 AD) was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382 to compile and translate all of the

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scriptural texts into a uniform Latin, now known as the Old Vulgate. Jerome's translation

of Exodus 12:11 ("…it is the Lord's Passover.") thus reads, "Est enim Phase (id est

transitus) Domini."; "It is the Passover (i.e. the Passage) of the Lord."[76] Jerome deemed it

necessary to explicate the meaning of the Latin *Phase* (Passover), by asserting that the

meaning is more clearly expressed as *transitus* (Passage, passing over, passing by). The

problem for Jerome was that *Phase* has no native meaning in Latin, but is rather a

transliteration of the Hebrew word for Passover, which is *pesach* (פקז).[77]

3.5.2 *Transitus Domini*: Inherent Movement in the Paschal Mystery

Jerome's selection of the Latin *transitus Domini* to express the "passing by of the

Lord" is a deft idiomatic translation of the Hebrew *pesach* that rightly imbues the concept

of the Passover with that of action, of movement. Jerome explains the etymological

challenge in his *Commentary on Matthew* (26: 1-2):

> In Hebrew the Passover is called PHASE. The name derives not from the word
> *passione*, as the majority think, but from *passing* (*transitus*), because the
> destroyer, upon seeing the blood on the doors of the Israelites, passed through and
> did not strike them.

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[76] Old Vulgate text for Ex. 12:11 cited from Roger Greenacre and Jeremy Haselock, *The Sacrament of Easter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Gracewing, 1995), 29. The phrasing "Est enim Phase (id est transitus) Domini" is found in a 1484 Italian edition of the Vulgate as, "Est eni phase .i. transitus on'i." *Biblia latina* (Venezia: Johan Herbot, 30 IV 1484), 48v., Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze, Magl. A.7.22.

[77] For a succinct explanation of the etymological difficulties in translating the Hebrew term for "Passover" (*pesach*, פקז), see, Arthur Carr, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew: The Cambridge Bible for Schools* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1878), 197.

<blockquote>
Pascha, quod Hebraice dicitur PHASE (פקן), non a *passione* ut plerique arbitrantur, sed a transitus nominatur: eo quod exterminator videns sanguinem, in foribus Israelitarum pertransierit, nec percusserit eos.[78]
</blockquote>

Other Fathers such as St. Augustine (354-430 AD), St. Gaudentius of Brescia (d. 410 AD) and the Venerable Bede (c. 673-735 AD) addressed the meaning of the Hebrew word for Passover (*pesach*) to correct mistranslations of the term into Latin, and to further expound on the typological connection of the Hebrew Passover with Christ's Resurrection as a *transitus Domini* (passing by of the Lord).

The confusion over the meaning of the Hebrew term *pesach* (Passover) and its transliteration into Latin as *Phase* is not only because *Phase* has no native meaning in Latin, but also because of an interpolation of the Greek term *Pascha* (πάσχα), which also means Passover. *Pascha* is the Latin transliteration of the Greek (πάσχα); the Greek *Pascha* (πάσχα) is a transliteration of the Hebrew *pesach* (פקן). Close to the Greek term *Pascha*, however, is the alternate Greek term of *paschein* (πάσχειν), which means, "to suffer," - not Passover. Thus in the Patristic literature, it was necessary to restore the typological meaning of Christ's Resurrection as a "passing by of the Lord" (*transitus Domini*).[79] *Phase*, *Pascha* and *transitus Domini* thus all mean Passover, where *transitus*

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[78] Hieryonimus, *Commentariorum in Evangelium Matthaei Libir Quattor*, PL 29.190. Matt. 26:1-2 reads, "And when it came about when Jesus had finished all these words he said to his disciples: "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of man will be handed over to be crucified." Also cited in, Saint Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 291-292.

[79] St. Augustine also sought to provide clarity regarding the meaning of the term *Pascha* in his commentaries on the Gospel of John (*In Iohannis Evangelium*). In describing John 13:1-5, where Jesus washed his disciples' feet before the Feast of Passover, Augustine explains, "Pascha, brothers, is not, as some think, a Greek word but a Hebrew one…But

Domini is the most accurate term in describing the idiomatic meaning of the Hebrew

Passover, and the Resurrection of Christ, as an action implying movement.

3.5.3 *Transitus Domini* and the Eucharist

The concept of *transitus Domini* (passing by of the Lord) in relation to the

typological understanding of Christ's Resurrection was folded in to the mystical and

eschatological interpretation of the Eucharist itself. The Church Fathers discerned a

pressing connection between the salvific acts of the Lord passing over Egypt, Christ as

the *Agnus Dei* who "takes away the sin of the world" with his victory in the Resurrection,

and the changing of the Gifts from bread and wine into the Body and Blood. The

transitus Domini as a translation of Passover provided a mystical explication of

Transubstantiation – the Lord "passing over" the Holy Gifts, a moment of action and

movement catalyzed at the Institution Narrative in the Roman Canon of the Mass.

Through an enraptured turn of phrase, St. Gaudentius (d. 410), Bishop of Brescia,

expresses the relation between the Hebrew Passover and the changing of the Holy Gifts

in his Commentary on Exodus 12:

> It is the Passover of the Lord. O depth of the riches of the knowledge and wisdom
> of God! It is the Passover, he says, that is, the Passover of the Lord [*transitus*

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in its own language, that is, in Hebrew, Pascha means "a passing over."; "Pascha, fratres,
non sicut quidam existimant, graecum nomen est, sed hebraeum…in sua uero lingua, hoc
est in hebraea, Pascha transitus dicitur." The Venerable Bede also translates Pascha as
"passing over," using the Latin term *transitus*: "Pascha means "passing over…"; "Pascha
quippe transitus interpretatur…." Augustinus, *In Iohannis Evangelium*, Tractatus
CXXXIV, 55.1, *CCSL* 36, p. 463; Beda, *Opera Homiletica et rhythmica*, Homelia 2.5,
CCSL 122, p. 214. Also see, Carr, *The Gospel*, 197; Jerome, *Commentaries*, trans.
Scheck, 291, esp. nt. 197.

Domini]; think not that earthly which is made heavenly by Him, who passes into it [*transiit*], and has made it His Body and Blood.[80]

The import of St. Gaudentius' text is a direct meditation on the Eucharist. He admonishes the reader not to consider "that earthly" (*terrenum*), which is "made heavenly" (*caeleste*), by Him "who passes into it" (*qui transiit in illud*). He speaks of the earthly species of bread and wine being transformed into the heavenly Body and Blood by Christ who "passes into it." Edward Kilmartin observes that Gaudentius uses the verb *transitus* (*qui transiit in illud*) in the sense of change in location when eucharistically interpreting the "Passover of the Lord."[81]

Kilmartin continues, asserting that by the Scholastic Period of the middle ages, the action of consecrating the Host meant both "the *transitus* of the elements into the eucharistic body and blood, and the *transitus* of the consecrated flesh into the heavenly body of Christ."[82] The scholastic notion of "double *transitus*," both describing the transformation of the Gifts, and their mystical infusion with the historic body of Christ in heaven, strikes an evocative link between the artworks that make a double claim to the True Presence (e.g. Rogier van der Weydens *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece* and Raphael's *Disputa*) by picturing the Host and Resurrected Christ simultaneously. As explored in the previous section, however, Michelangelo does not make a double claim to True Presence

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[80] "Pascha est enim Domini (Exod. XII). O altitude divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei! Pascha est, inquit, Domini: hoc est transitus Domini; ne terrenum putes quod caeleste effectum est per eum qui transiit in illud, et fecit illud suum corpus et sanguinem." Guadentius Brixiae Episcopus, *Tractatus II in Exodum XXXV*, *PL* 20.858.

[81] Kilmartin, *Eucharist*, 55.

[82] Ibid., 65-66.

with the *Risen Christ*, particularly when considered from the Eucharistic View vantage point (fig. 19). Instead of somehow picturing the Host as an attribute or otherwise, Michelangelo makes a singular claim by simply showcasing Christ's body – a strategy realized through activating contemporaneous modes of viewing the consecrated Host.

Accordingly, the Paschal mystery – the mystery of the Resurrection and henceforth the Eucharist - intertwines the typological and eschatological implications of the Lord's "passing by" (*transitus Domini*). The Paschal mystery represents a concrete action of Christ moving "into" the elements of the Eucharist, and moving amongst His people, first in Egypt and then from the Tomb. The Christ of the Resurrection then is a Christ "passing over," a Christ literally in transit.

3.5.4 Temporal Implications: The *Risen Christ*, *Transitus Domini* & Anamnesis

Michelangelo put the stepping right leg of the *Risen Christ* hard to work. From the proper right side (fig. 47), Christ appears to be static, as the figure's right leg gently wraps around the cross, foregrounding that predestined plank of timber as an attribute of victory. From the frontal position (fig. 17), however, the figure appears poised to advance forward into the viewer's space. The proper right leg projects out from the vertical axis of the figure's torso, with its pressing toes slipping down the sloping edge of the base below, multiplying the figure's anticipated action. The rearward left leg planted firmly behind is staged to propel the figure forward. The torsion of Christ's torso charges the divine corpus with an internal energy that is on the brink of transferal to the legs beneath. From the frontal position, Michelangelo's Christ is a Christ in action, a *transitus Domini*.

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Advancing to the proper left side towards the Eucharistic View (fig. 19), the

figure's potential energy is mitigated by the pressing right foot. The elevated heel and

pressing toes bespeaks a Christ contemplating advancement heavenward, as a nuanced

iconographic reference to the Ascension narrative. The leg from this angle also serves the

compositional function of obscuring the cross, the elegant result of which showcases the

body. The stepping leg resonates on multiple levels within the internal logic of the *Risen*

Christ's composition and iconographic program. It imbues movement, references the

Ascension, and obscures the cross from the Eucharistic View. And Christ's winding

sheet, draped on the plinth behind his left leg, is in the very act of falling off his corpus,

unveiling the Eucharistic view. The sheet becomes a relic left behind by the Risen Christ

– a Christ in transit.[83]

Inherent to the typological and Eucharistic understanding of Michelangelo's

Resurrection subject is Christ as *transitus Domini*. The imminent motion of the figure;

the passing by of the Lord, is most likely what inspired some of the sculptor's

contemporaries to associate the subject of the figure with the *Domini quo vadis* narrative

where Peter encounters Christ passing by him with cross in hand towards Rome.[84] The

Paschal underpinnings of the Resurrection subject and *Domini quo vadis* are predicted

upon Christ in motion.

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[83] I thank William E. Wallace for making the important connection of Christ's winding
sheet in the process of falling off, which emphasizes the figure's movement, and its
function in ceremoniously unveiling the Eucharistic view.

[84] For a discussion of the *Domini quo vadis* narrative, see, p. 3; and p. 18, nt. 37.

The temporal fabric of the *Risen Christ* is thus intimately informed by the master's sensitive treatment of the subject of Resurrection. Bound within it is a Eucharistic content that pictures the passing by of the Lord as the typological fulfillment of the Hebrew Passover. It also pictures the liturgical movement of anamnesis within the right of Consecration, where the salvific acts of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension are recapitulated into the present tense. The anamnetic character of the *Risen Christ* dilates the temporal potential of what the figure can picture, as the Eucharist itself draws multiple "times" within itself, both as historic action, True Presence, and future promise. The eminent liturgist Pius Parsch expresses the interrelation of time and movement within the Eucharistic context most aptly:

> In the Consecration past, present and future become one. The Lord is nigh – it is the *Phase*, the passing-by of the Lord (*transitus Domini*). He comes in the Flesh and Blood, as in the days of His first coming; at the same time He is the transfigured King of glory, and comes in the glory that will be revealed in His second coming.[85]

That the *Risen Christ* pictures multiple moments is a premise fundamental to its conception. The sculpture "moves time" thematically given its anamnetic character. It also moves time in phenomenological manner when considered in concert with early modern understandings of time itself. Aristotle's succinct yet puzzling definition of time as "the number of movement in respect of before and after" from the *Physics* Book IV.11, provided the most influential framework for subsequent thinkers to probe the

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[85] Pius Parsch, *The Liturgy of the Mass*, trans. H.E. Winstone, 3rd ed. (London: Herder Publications, 1961), 238.

duplex relation between time and movement.[86] In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas

Aquinas provided the clearest interpretation of Aristotle's definition by postulating what

the Philosopher meant, in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*.

In his *Commentaria*, Aquinas deduced what Aristotle meant by "time is the

number of movement in respect of before and after," by considering the phenomenal

relation between the two variables of time and movement. Aquinas unpacks this duplex

relation in the phenomenal sense by asserting, "thus by perceiving any sort of motion we

perceive time and, vice versa, when we perceive time we are simultaneously perceiving a

motion."[87] Aquinas means that movement indicates succession and thus duration in time.

The implications are cosmic, as the movement of the heavens produce the intervals of

years, seasons and days, and microcosmic as we perceive local movement in our

immediate environment. In short, when things move, time is elapsing.

The confluence of the broadest hypothesis of the dissertation, and the specific

program of Michelangelo's *Risen Christ* converge here. The *Risen Christ* moves because

it is an appropriate feature of the Resurrection subject as *transitus Domini*; it also moves

because the figure's imminent motion triggers the visual equivalent of a temporal flow.

The phenomenal experience of the figure in motion as an expression of duration is

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[86] The Greek form of Aristotle's definition of time that Aquinas worked from is found in
Aquinas' *Commentaria*: "ὅτι μὲν τοίνυν ὁ χρόνος ἀριθμός ἐστιν κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ
πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον." Aquinas' Latin translation of the Greek is, "tempus numerus
motus secundum prius et posterius sit." Sanctus Thomae Aquinatis, *Corpus Thomsticum:
Opera Omnia* (Rome: Editio Leonina II, 1884), 208.

[87] "Et sic percipiendo quecumque motum, percipimus tempus: et similiter e converso,
cum percipimus tempus, simul percipimus motum." Aquinatis, *Corpus*, 202.

concomitant with the broad temporal scope of anamnesis. By making the *Risen Christ* move with a purpose particular to the subject of Resurrection, Michelangelo moves time.

3.6 Conclusion

The circumstances of Michelangelo's execution and installation of the *Risen Christ* in the Roman Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva were fraught with difficulties from the outset. With the aid of his assistant Federigo Frizzi, Leonardo Sellaio and Sebastiano del Piombo, Michelangelo's figure was nonetheless brought to praiseworthy completion at its unveiling in December 1521. While Michelangelo's contemporaries lauded the sculpture, its subsequent critical fortune declined from the Baroque period into the twentieth century. The modern assessment of the figure has been particularly cruel, citing the sculpture's purported sub-standard aesthetic value and specious religious character. More recent assessments of the *Risen Christ* however have resuscitated the figure's standing within the master's corpus – the locus point of which has been robust analyses of the *Risen Christ's* iconographic program.

The sculpture's ostensibly ambiguous subject has prompted interpretations of the figure's meaning which have predominately oscillated between the Man of Sorrows and Risen Christ types. Additional research has demonstrated that the *Risen Christ* also pictures an iconographic reference to the Ascension narrative, evinced by the figure's stepping, pressing right foot. The prominent episodic content of Passion, Resurrection and Ascension that the figure proposes has created an interpretive opportunity to consider the *Risen Christ's* thematic *raison d'être*.

Drawing upon lessons learned early in his career from carving the *Bacchus*, Michelangelo reinstituted the possibilities of marshaling multiple vantage points to enliven the *Risen Christ's* narrative dimensions. Both the *Bacchus* and *Risen Christ* demand the viewer's movement to discover visual information vital to each figure's narrative content. Michelangelo carved the shape of both bases to indicate primary points of view in relation to the figures above. Drawing upon narrative strategies established in Hellenistic sculpture, the Florentine *scultore* utilized the 'reveal/conceal' technique to disclose aspects of each figure's program, where visual access is only granted upon the viewer's movement in space.

The *Risen Christ's* 'reveal' from the figure's proper left side occludes the Instruments of the Passion (*arma christi*) from view, showcasing Christ's pristine body. The demonstrative occlusion of the *arma christi* from the Eucharistic view activates cultural strategies of viewing the Eucharist prevalent from the late twelfth century forward. As the cult of the Eucharist was predominately predicated upon sight, the Eucharistic View serves as a parallel visual theophany to the Elevation of the Host during the Roman Canon of the Mass. The anamnesis prayer, immediately following the consecration and Elevation of the Host, recapitulates Christ's saving deeds of Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, thus providing Michelangelo's thematic content for the *Risen Christ*. The liturgical inspiration of the figure's conceptual program enabled the master to express a broad temporal range in relation to the person of Christ.

The supreme economy of Michelangelo's composition is foregrounded within a broader context of depictions of the Eucharist in art, where a double claim for True

Presence in the Eucharist is depicted. While examples such as Fra Bartolommeo's *Salvator Mundi* and Raphael's *Disputa* make this double claim to True Presence by picturing the Host and historic body of the Risen Christ simultaneously within a single visual field, Michelangelo's claim to the True Presence from the Eucharistic View is singular. The *Salvator Mundi* and *Disputa* reinforce the doctrine of Transubstantiation by allowing the viewer to see the *accidens* of the Host (bread and wine) and the *substantia* of the historic body of Christ in tandem. The *Risen Christ* however conflates the *accidens* and *substantia* of the True Presence into a single, Eucharistic View. The Eucharistic View pictures what the Host purports to be – the historic body of the resurrected Christ.

Native to discourses on the Eucharist from the Patristic period forward is the notion of the Risen Christ as a typological fulfillment of the Hebrew Passover – a *transitus Domini* (passing by of the Lord) that traverses time and enters the Eucharist at each celebration of the mass. The Paschal mystery envisions Christ as an eschatological presence in motion. The imminent movement of Michelangelo's Christ embodies the *transitus domini* typos, both as an expression of the Paschal mystery and as a phenomenological presence.

Informed by Aristotle's reflections on the nature of time, the early modern imagination understood the perception of movement in the phenomenal world to be an indication of succession, and therefore the passage of time. With its manifold function, the stepping right leg of the *Risen Christ* activates a temporal flow concomitant with the figure's anamnetic character. By seeing the figure 'move,' we perceive that the *Risen Christ's* expansive subject is in temporal flux. Michelangelo's ability to elegantly capture

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the temporal complexity of Christ's kerygma bespeaks a sculptor in full command of his intellectual and technical capacities. The fluid compositional delivery of the figure's anamnetic content establishes the *Risen Christ* as one of the most sensitive sculptural meditations on the person of Christ in early modern art.

Chapter 4:
The *Rondanini Pietà* and the Metaphysics of Carving

4.1 Introduction

What silent canticle of ancient hope bends our rough figures in consonant rhythm; a tune imperceptible to our ears whose swaying effect is only grasped by the eye? We approach mid-tune, unannounced, amidst an immemorial melody. We dance with the God-Man and his bride, circling about them, in search of what moves them to sinuous pity. They possess the secret that Michelangelo's chisel seeks to disclose - each stroke an act of contrition revealing the mystery of the Word become Flesh. Matter and spirit conjoin, dissolving within it the paradox of hymnody made visible. The sculptor of divinity whispers to look with reverence. Salvation's song absent words demands silence.

Michelangelo's *Rondanini Pietà* (c. 1555-1564) (fig. 69) - named after the Roman Palazzo Rondanini where the statue once stood - is indeed a strange thing to behold, as if our gaze is intruding upon a private moment.[1] Nearly all aspects of its intended function, date of inception and ambiguous iconography are shrouded in uncertainty. Despite being a relative latecomer in the criticism of Michelangelo's canon of sculpture, the *Rondanini Pietà* has nonetheless seized the imagination of modern interpreters, prompted by the figures' sonorous, supra-classical form, and radical revisions evinced by the disjointed right arm left intact, remnant of an earlier stage of the groups' composition (fig. 70). The

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[1] For the provenance of how the *Rondanini Pietà* was acquired by the Roman Rondanini family, and its subsequent installation history, see, John T. Paoletti, "The Rondanini "*Pietà*:" Ambiguity Maintained through the Palimpsest," *Artibus et Historiae* 21:42 (2000): 53, and ftnt. 1, p. 74.

radically revised, roughly worked surface evokes the residue of a mortal struggle Michelangelo waged against the marble block.

Before addressing the documentary evidence of when Michelangelo began carving the group, we may highlight the important fact that the artist began this work in the twilight of what for the early modern period was an unusually long life. Born 6 March 1475, Michelangelo was well into his seventies by the 1550's. As his sculptural production had primarily given way to architectural projects later in life, the aged sculptor nonetheless endeavored to take up the physically demanding charge of attempting to carve a monumental figural group. Perhaps intended as the altarpiece for his own tomb, it has proved magnetically irresistible to imbue the *Rondanini Pietà* with autobiographical content.[2] The autobiographical possibilities of this work are intensified by the apparent struggle Michelangelo had in resolving his iconographic vision. Put directly: What failure of conception or execution prompted Michelangelo to radically revise his composition?

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[2] John Paoletti convincingly argues that it is highly possible Michelangelo intended the *Rondanini Pietà* for his own tomb. Both Paoletti and Paula Carabell wage sophisticated arguments that the supposed autobiographical content of the work springs from the artist's inner turmoil regarding salvation and self-identity. Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 68-73; Paula Carabell, "Image and Identity in the Unfinished Works of Michelangelo," *Res* 32 (Autumn, 1997): 83-105. Other scholarly works that emphasize the autobiographical and spiritual content of the sculpture's program include, Giorgio Vasari, *La vita di Michelangelo nelle redazione del 1550 e del 1568*, ed. Paola Barocchi, vol. 4 (Milan-Naples: R. Riccardi), pp. 1670-1690; Frederick Hartt, *Michelangelo: The Complete Sculpture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1968), pp. 290-300; Robert Liebert, *Michelangelo* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 409-415; Jean Pierre Barricelli, "Michelangelo's Finito: In the Self, the Later Sonnets, and the Last *Pietà*," *New Literary History* 24 (1993): 597-612; John Dixon, *The Christ of Michelangelo: An Essay on Carnal Spirituality* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), pp. 145-147.

While some have asserted that the fragmented state of the sculpture is a result of Michelangelo's failing physical strength and clarity of iconographic conviction, others posit that the revisions Michelangelo undertook are indicative of a deeper, internal mêlée to cope with his mortality and salvation in Christ. Thus the compositional revisions reveal salvific tumult.[3] According to this line of inquiry, the reason Michelangelo revised his creation was due to dissatisfaction with the iconography of his work in relation to its spiritual content. The very act of revision therefore is akin to an act of repentance. It is this view that predominates in our understanding of the *Rondanini Pietà*: mechanical revisions of the sculpture equate to spiritual reformations of the master's dogma.

This essay seeks to augment our understanding of the originary predicament that catalyzed Michelangelo's revision of the work. We move to demonstrate that the master's revision of the *Rondanini Pietà's* iconography was an adroit response to an intrinsic flaw in the marble block - not the artist's iconographic doctrine. In plain sight but heretofore-unremarked runs a dark vein in the marble that traverses from Christ's right groin up through his right shoulder, in the final figural arrangement. Utilizing a sheet of drawings showing five iterations of the *Pietà* group (fig. 71), we will reconstruct the original composition for the *Rondanini Pietà* within the confines of the actual marble block, demonstrating that this marble vein would have run directly through the face of Christ in its original composition. Upon recognition of this ungainly portent, we posit that Michelangelo chose to carve out and away from the vein into the back corner of the

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[3] Howard Hibbard's low appraisal of the *Rondanini Pietà* posits failing physical strength and a Gothicizing tendency as the culprit for the groups' lack of quality. Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo: Painter, Sculptor, Architect* (New York: Vendome Press, 1978), 190. For a shortlist of autobiographical interpretations of the sculpture, see footnote 1.

block, which necessarily precipitated the physical shift of the figures, which by implication shifted the iconographic meaning of the group.

Positing that Michelangelo revised his iconography in response to the block's vein presupposes a fluid dialectic between the material challenges of carving and the iconographic formulation of meaning. Our interpretive trajectory does not seek to preclude the autobiographical dimension of Michelangelo's last sculpture. Rather, it seeks to recontextualize the nature of the master's expression of salvation in stone, in relation to the physical and metaphysical content of carving itself. We thus encounter a paradox central to the broader concerns of the dissertation.

For the *Doni Tondo* and *Risen Christ* previously examined, we encountered a visual strategy present in the works where the implied movement of Christ in each artwork sought to expand the temporal continuum of the subject depicted – where the subject itself is a compression of multiple subjects simultaneously. Christ's implied active movement thus catalyzed the compression of subject matter and their concomitant "times" into a broader temporal continuum.

Inversely, while the *Rondanini Pietà's* iconography compresses multiple subjects into its figural composition (a point expounded in the next section) – Michelangelo chose to arrest any vestige of active movement. In fact, while the subject of the *Rondanini Pietà* is expansive like the *Doni Tondo* and *Risen Christ*, the elegant stillness of Michelangelo's last work is one of its most striking features. We return to our paradox: at the end of the sculptor's life, the continuous act of carving and revising the iconography of his last work is ultimately what led to "figural rest," which may be related autobiographically to

spiritual rest, even if the final composition was left unresolved. For Michelangelo and his last sculpture, flux begat stability in the work and probably, by extension, to himself.

The *Rondanini Pietà* thus serves as an appropriate bookend to the master's sculptural corpus, as well as to this dissertation. Prominent and persistent themes throughout Michelangelo's career culminate in this last work, where the sculptor's artistic ruminations on the person of Christ meet their apogee in an unfinished, noetic apparition of his heart's desire. Flame-like and imperfect in its completion, the *Rondanini Pietà* may be the most uninhibited work of art Michelangelo ever attempted.

4.2 Inception, Iconography, and Autobiographical Interpretation

4.2.1 Inception

Little concrete documentary evidence is available to illuminate the circumstances of when Michelangelo began carving the *Rondanini Pietà*, or its intended function. One day after the master's death on 19 February 1564, an inventory was taken of his Roman studio in Via Macel de' Corvi, listing the items present. Amongst the items were three marble statues, noted as "a statue of St. Peter, blocked out but not completed, another statue begun of a Christ and another figure above, attached together, blocked out and not finished, and a statuette of a Christ with the cross on his shoulder, also not finished."[4]

The statue now associated with the *Rondanini Pietà*, however, is not listed as a Pietà. Rather the notary describes the work as "another statue begun of a Christ and another figure above, attached together, blocked out and not finished…." It is likely that

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[4] "Una statua principiata per uno santo Pietro, sbozzata a non finita. Un'altra statua principiata per un Cristo et un'altra figura di sopra, ataccata insieme, sbozzata e non finita." The inventory is presented in Vasari/Barocchi, *Le Vite*, 1962, IV, pp. 1848-1851.

the notary's visual description does not venture to describe the group as a Pietà given that

the figures do not correspond to traditional means of depicting the subject. However, on

17 March, just a month after the inventory was taken, Michelangelo's pupil Daniele da

Volterra described the figure as "a Pietà in the arms of Our Lady [the Madonna]."[5]

Daniele's iconographic identification has thus set the stage for our understanding of

Michelangelo's group as a Pietà to this day.

Neither Giorgio Vasari in his 1550 edition of the *Vite* nor Ascanio Condivi in his

1553 biography of Michelangelo mentions the *Rondanini Pietà*, signifying that work on

the group may have been started after 1553.[6] Yet in the second edition of Vasari's *Vite* of

1568, the biographer asserts that after Michelangelo had damaged his Florentine *Pietà*

(fig. 72) in 1555, "it became necessary to find some work in marble on which he might

be able to pass some time every day with the chisel, and another piece of marble was put

before him, from which another Pietà had been already blocked out, different from the

first [Florentine *Pietà*] and much smaller."[7] While the Florentine *Pietà* is slightly taller

than the Rondanini, it is nonetheless curious that Vasari would describe it as "much

smaller."[8] Crucial, however, is that if Vasari's description of a second Pietà begun after

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[5] "una Pietà in braccio alla Nostra Donna." Ibid., IV, 1849.

[6] See John Paoletti for a succinct chronology of the sculpture's suggested inception. Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 53-54.

[7] Vasari/Barocchi, *Vite*, I, p. 100.

[8] The Florentine *Pietà* measures 226 cm in height, while the *Rondanini Pietà* measures 195 cm in height, marking a difference of 31 cm. For a discussion on why Vasari may have described the Rondanini as being much smaller (molto minore), see Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 54, and ftnt. 10, p. 75.

the Florentine *Pietà* in 1555 does indeed reference the *Rondanini Pietà*, then the group

may have been begun after Condivi's biography of 1553 and around or before 1555. We

may surmise then that Michelangelo began carving the *Rondanini Pietà* in earnest in

1555, at the approximate age of 80.

4.2.2 Iconography

Like much of Michelangelo's work in painting and sculpture, including the *Doni

Tondo* and *Risen Christ*, the *Rondanini Pietà's* subject matter invites associations with

traditional depictions of sacred subjects while not wholly conforming to their norms of

depiction.[9] The artist was driven to innovate, perhaps less as an impulse for novelty, but

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[9] For a survey of the *Rondanini Pietà's* interpretive history, see, Charles de Tolnay, "Michelangelo's Rondanini *Pietà*," *The Burlington Magazine* LXV (1934): 146-157; Frtiz Baumgart, "Die Pietà Rondanini," *Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen* LVI (1935): 44-56; Dagobert Frey, "Die Pietà Rondanini und Rembrandts 'Drei Kreuze'," *Kunstgeschichtliche Studien für Hans Kaufmann*, ed. Wolfgang Braunfels (Berlin: Mann, 1956), 208-220; Tolnay, *Michelangelo: Final Period*, 154-157; Alexander Perrig, *Michelangelo Buonarroti's Ietzte Pietà-Idee* (Bern: Francke, 1960); Lutipold Dussler, "Die Spätwerke des Michelangelo," *Michelangelo Buonarroti* (Würzburg: Leonhardt, 1964), 115-155; Leo Steinberg, "Metaphors of Love and Birth in Michelangelo's *Pietà's*," *Studies in Erotic Art*, ed. Theodore Bowie and Cornelia V. Christenson (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 231-285; Frederick Hartt, *Michelangelo's Three Pietàs* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1975); Irving Lavin, "The Sculptor's *Last Will and Testament*'," *Bulletin of the Allen Memorial Art Museum* XXXV, pp. 1-2 (1977-1978), pp. 4-39; Alessandro Parronchi, "La Pietà Rondanini è quel che rimane della Pietà per Vittoria Colonna," *Opere giovanili di Michelangelo. III. Miscellanea Michelangiolesca* (Florence: Olschki, 1981), 122-141; Jeffrey Rayner Meyers, "The *Rondanini Pietà* and the Tradition of Pius Aeneas," *Source* 5 (1986): 20-24; Alexander Nagel, "Observations on Michelangelo's Late Pietà Drawings and Sculptures," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 59 (1996): 548-572; Dixon, *The Christ*, 145-147; Antonio Paolucci, *Michelangelo: Le Pietà* (Milan: Skira, 1997); William E. Wallace, *Michelangelo: The Complete Sculpture, Painting, Architecture* (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1998), 130-133; Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 143-215; Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 53-80; Carabell, "Image and Identity," 83-105; Philipp P. Fehl, "Michelangelo's Tomb in Rome:

rather as a means of probing deeper into the essential meaning of the content displayed. This is especially true for Michelangelo in his treatment of the person of Christ, as demonstrated in chapters two and three. As Christ exists temporally as the eternally begotten in his divinity, as well as a historical person in his humanation (thus the mystery of the Incarnation), the subject of Christ taken broadly allows for expansive narrative possibilities.

The traditional representation of the Pietà with the dead Christ in repose across the Virgin's lap, as in the Rome *Pietà* of Michelangelo's youth (fig. 73), is an extra-biblical devotional image temporally situated between the Deposition of Christ from the cross, and the Entombment of Christ.[10] The dead Christ across the Virgin's lap evokes Madonna and Child imagery, where the young child is presented with his mother, often in a proleptic manner to anticipate his coming death. Pietà imagery thus aims to move the viewer towards reflection and pity for the Savior's suffering and death, and cements the unique bond between son and mother.

Observations on the *Pieta* in Florence and the *Rondanini Pietá*," *Artibus et Historiae* 23:45 (2002): 9-27; Maria Teresa Fiorio, *La Pietà Rondanini* (Milan: Electa, 2004); Carlo Del Bravo, "Sulle redazione della 'Pietà Rondanini,'" *Artista* (2005): 90-95; Richard E. Lamoureux, "La Pietà Rondanini di Michelangelo: la resurrezione del corpo," *Gesù* (2010): 167-175.

[10] For the history of the Pietà image type - a term that spans both concepts of "pity" and "piety" – see Hans Belting, *Giovanni Bellini. Pietà: ikone und Bilderzählung in der venezianischen Malerei* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985); Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990); Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

A problematic aspect of the *Rondanini Pietà*, however, is that rather than the

Christ being positioned across his mother's lap, he is presented vertically, where the

Virgin behind Christ impossibly supports the entirety of his weight. The Virgin's support

is accentuated given that Christ's legs, bent at the knees, do not bear his own weight.

Clearly, Michelangelo made the body mechanics of the figural arrangement subservient

to the central theme of solidarity between mother and son. In fact, rather than tapping the

traditional Pietà formal arrangement, the sculptor more heavily refers to Lamentation

imagery, although more rare, where several figures mourn the dead Christ as he is

propped up beneath the arms, such as Fra Angelico's *Entombment* (1440, fig. 74),

Jacopino del Conte's *Pietà* (c. 1550, fig. 75)*, or Taddeo Zuccari's *Pietà with Angels*

(1560, fig. 76).

Yet, the *Rondanini Pietà* cannot be rooted in any specific moment in time. While

evocative of imagery associated with the Passion and Entombment – all action is

suspended, short-circuiting clear identification of the subject.[11] This point is accentuated

given the composition is a group of two with no additional attributes. Thus in its final

state, the Christ with his mother comprise a devotional presence that compresses the

Deposition, Lamentation and Entombment into an indissoluble whole.

<u>Christ's Support: Mary or Nicodemus?</u>

One vexing but crucial detail remains that complicates our understanding of the

sculpture. When viewing the group from its frontal position, it is clear that the left leg of

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[11] For informative discussions on the *Rondanini Pietà's* iconography, see Tolnay,
Michelangelo: Final Period, 86; Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 63-71.

the figure behind Christ is denuded (fig. 81). As John Paoletti convincingly argued, the

notion that the Virgin's leg could ever be exposed in such a manner breaks with decorum,

the immodest nature of which Michelangelo was well aware. Thus Paoletti persuasively

argued that originally, before Michelangelo radically revised the composition, the figure

behind Christ was not Mary but rather Nicodemus, the Pharisee and secret Christian

attested to in the gospels that provided the provisions and preparation of Christ's body for

burial.[12]

Nicodemus was the patron saint of sculptors and would have been an appropriate

figure to couple with Christ, given that the Pharisee also figures into to the narrative of

the Gospels concerning Christ's crucifixion and entombment. For the Florentine *Pietà*,

Nicodemus – whose visage also serves as a self-portrait of Michelangelo – looms above

his savior, ministering to his dead body with the others. Yet, the Florentine *Pietà's*

composition apparently troubled Michelangelo greatly, as he damaged Christ's left leg

that originally was "slung" over the Virgin's lap – perhaps a nod to erotic love the master

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[12] Paoletti brings several of Michelangelo's drawings to bear on the fact that not only did Michelangelo never draw (or sculpt) the Virgin with uncovered legs, but also any time Michelangelo did represent a figure with exposed legs, they were always unequivocally male. Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 58-65. Wolfgang Stechow also suggested alternative traditions for Pietà imagery where Joseph of Arimethea or Nicodemus support the dead Christ. Stechow, however, did not concretely associate this possibility with the *Rondanini Pietà*. Wolfgang Stechow, "Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus?", *Studien zur toskanischen Kunst. Festschrift für Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich zum 23. März 1963*, ed. Wolfgang Lotz (Munich: Prestel, 1964), 289-302.

may have sensed to be inappropriate, especially given the group was destined for his own tomb.[13]

4.2.3 Autobiographical Interpretation

The more explosive conflict comes into focus, however, given the meaning associated with Michelangelo's affinity for Nicodemus. Beyond the patron saint of sculptors, Nicodemus became associated with the reformation movement, given Nicodemus was a "secret" Christian of sorts who never proclaimed his faith publicly in the fashion of the Apostles. Nicodemism, or secretive sympathy for reform movements within the Church, aligned itself uncomfortably close to Protestant sentiments – a prospect some scholars purport Michelangelo to have embraced, given his involvement with reform minded Catholics such as Vittoria Colonna and Cardinal Reginald Pole, as well as modern interpretations of the role of Nicodemus in his Florentine *Pietà*. Despite there being no concrete evidence of Michelangelo being a "Nicodemist," this possibility has deeply moved some modern observers to associate the artist's abandonment of the Florentine *Pietà* with fears of the Inquisition during the reign of Paul IV (1555-1559).[14]

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[13] Leo Steinberg, "Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà*: The Missing Leg," *Art Bulletin* 50:4 (1968): 343-353; Steinberg, "Metaphors of Love and Birth," 231-285; Leo Steinberg, "Animadversions: Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà*: The Missing Leg Twenty Years After," *Art Bulletin* 71:3 (1989): 480-505.

[14] For the topic of Michelangelo and Nicodemism, see Jane Kristoff, "Michelangelo as Nicodemus: *The Florence Pietà*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* XX (1989): 165-182; Valerie Shrimplin-Evangelidis, "Michelangelo and Nicodemism: The Florentine Pietà," *Art Bulletin* 71:1 (1989): 58-66. See also Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 60-68, and ftnt. 61, pp. 79-80 for an extensive bibliography of Nicodemism during the sixteenth century.

This interpretive sentiment has thus informed our current understanding as to *why* Michelangelo so radically changed the *Rondanini Pietà's* composition, especially when the sculpture is compared to the Florentine *Pietà's* controversial content. Nicodemus in the *Rondanini Pietà*, representative of a brand of sixteenth century Christianity that questioned the Church's role to bind and loose sins, seemingly presents Michelangelo's view that salvation was a personal matter, achieved *sola gratia*. Thus such reasoning follows, when Michelangelo abandoned the original composition including Nicodemus in favor of the figure of Mary – who traditionally represents *ecclesia*, or the Church as the arc of salvation – the shift in iconography equates to a shift in spiritual conviction: Michelangelo picks the Church over salvation *sola gratia*.

The composition in its final state remains unresolved given the remnant presence of Nicodemus's exposed left leg, now transposed to the Virgin. We nonetheless have persisted to associate Michelangelo's shift in iconography with a shift in spirituality; a deeply personal, autobiographical struggle for his own salvation carved into the very surface and content of the work. It is clear Michelangelo struggled with realizing the group in a satisfactory manner, especially given that his pupil Daniele da Volterra reported on 11 June 1564 to Michelangelo's nephew, Lionardo Buonarroti, that the master had continued to work tirelessly on the sculpture until only six days before his death.[15]

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[15] Daniele writes that Michelangelo kept working "tutto il sabbato della domenica di Carnovale; e llavorò in piedi, studiando sopra quel corpo della Pietà." See, *Il Carteggio indiretto di Michelangelo*, ed. Paola Barocchi, Kathleen Loach Bramanti, and Renzo Ristori, II (Florence: S.P.E.S, 1995), 198-200.

Yet we move to propose an alternative catalyst for why Michelangelo recarved the *Rondanini Pietà*, still autobiographical, but not dependent upon a fundamental volte-face of the artist's doctrine. Unlike the Florentine *Pietà* where Michelangelo seems to have damaged Christ's left leg due to iconographic misgivings, I posit that Michelangelo recarved the *Rondanini Pietà* in response to discovering a dark vein in the marble that would have run straight through the face of Christ in the groups' initial composition. Thus the *Rondanini Pietà's* shift in iconography marks the artist's elegant solution to a flaw in the block, rather than a doctrinal change of heart. Rather than abandoning the sculpture, I propose Michelangelo salvaged the endeavor by rethinking the groups' composition and content within the material remainder of the marble block, which presupposes a fluid dynamic between form, content, and the mechanical challenges of carving. At the end of his life, Michelangelo sought rest in Christ. The means to attain spiritual stasis, paradoxically, was through the fluctuous act of carving.

4.3 The Portentous Vein

4.3.1 Formal Analysis & Orientation Within the Block

We are able to determine the frontal view of the *Rondanini Pietà's* composition (fig. 77) given that one sole plane remains from the volumetric parameters of the block, as discernable at the base of the groups' proper right side (fig. 78). From this plane, we can reconstruct the orientation of the figures within the block, which provides insight into the dimensional constraints Michelangelo was working against as he revised the sculpture's composition to its final state (figs. 79-80). We may reiterate that discernment

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of the groups' orientation within the block is crucial – it delimits the material possibilities and limitations within which Michelangelo strove to achieve his composition.

In its final state squared to the frontal plane (fig. 77, 79), we encounter the sinuous body of Christ intimately pressed against the body of his mother behind. The Virgin towers above her dead son, with gaze solemnly directed downwards to her left in consonant orientation with the Christ. Her left arm and hand gently pass over her son's left arm and shoulder, terminating in a gentle caress near Christ's chin. From this vantage point, the Madonna's exposed left leg is within sight as she stands atop her stony basin that is elevated to the mid-calf of Christ's left leg (fig. 81).

The figure of Christ is enveloped within the tender embrace of his mother (fig. 81). His left arm, as if vivified, is positioned as to brace himself around the Virgin's left flank. His slender torso plummets within the same plane as his downcast head, only to reverse in contrapposto as his legs, defying the pressing weight of his body, reverse to his right. Christ's left leg and foot seem to be capable of supporting the weight of his corpus, yet the right foot is loosed from the burden of his body, supplying no aid to the task of support, as it turns outward to the right. And as we glimpse left, we encounter the phantom limb: Christ's now severed right arm projects vertically as a watchman over the care of its now disembodied torso.

The melodic, flame-like intertwining of mother and son is most evident when the group is viewed from its proper right side (fig. 82). The Madonna swoops over and above the Christ whose combined forms create perhaps the greatest arc in Michelangelo's sculptural oeuvre. The same sonorous rhythm is recapitulated from the sculpture's proper

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left side (fig. 83) as the figures bend to a melody only perceptible to the eye. Christ's

phantom limb elides with its former socket, providing a vision of what was, and might

have been. And from the rear (fig. 84), the Madonna's great mass rolls forward, wholly

enveloping the figure beneath.

4.3.2 The Oxford Sheet and the Groups' Initial Orientation Within the Block

A Series of five formative sketches for the *Rondanini Pietà*, referred to as the

Oxford Sheet (c.1550-1555, fig. 85), provides a glimpse into the progression of

Michelangelo's thought as he developed the sculpture's composition.[16] The preparatory

sketches evince two divergent compositional types of Christ being carried or lowered,

presumably to his tomb. Both types position the body of Christ in a vertical position.[17]

Consensus asserts that the middle sketch (no. 1, fig. 85), and the sketch to its right (no. 2,

fig. 85) comprise the first and second drawings of the first compositional type, where

Christ is carried by two male figures on each side, presumably Nicodemus and Joseph of

Arimathea (Jn. 19:38-39; Lk. 23:53; Mk. 15:46).[18]

Of the second type on the Oxford sheet, which most closely corresponds to the

Rondanini Pietà, Michelangelo has reduced the group to two figures. The sketch second

on the left (no. 3, fig. 85) is presumed to be the initial articulation of this second type.

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[16] For the most succinct analyses of the Oxford Sheet, see Tolnay: *Michelangelo: The Final Period*, 89-90; Alexander Perrig, *Michelangelo's Drawings: The Science of Attribution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 56, 59. Perrig dates the Oxford Drawing to 1552-1553 (p. 93); Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 55-57, and ftnts. 12, 13, and 14 (p. 75) for the essential bibliography for the Oxford Sheet.

[17] Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Final Period*, 89.

[18] Ibid., 89.

Here, a figure above grasps Christ beneath his arms, with a noticeable gap between the above figure's downcast head, and the uppermost left shoulder of Christ. Christ's head slumps directly above his right shoulder, as his legs limply twist in contrapposto to his left. The vertical alignment of Christ's head above his right shoulder and vertically positioned arm is striking.

The second articulation of the second type (comprised of only two figures) is to the sheet's far right (no. 4, fig. 85), where from a vantage point towards the group's left, we perceive Michelangelo has maintained the distance between the two figures' heads and the vertical positioning of Christ's head directly above his right arm, but importantly, has abandoned the contrapposto. Now, the legs and head are both positioned to Christ's right side. For the last sketch to the sheet's far left side (no. 5, fig. 85), we see the same motif repeated except from an even more oblique angle turned towards the figures' left sides. It is from this final sketch that we are able to determine with some specificity the composition of the marble group before it was revised, leaving the phantom right arm of Christ suspended in mid-air. This final sketch corresponds very closely to the *Rondanini Pietà's* composition when viewed from a frontal orientation within the block (fig. 86).

As we approach our investigation as to why Michelangelo revised the work so radically, either being moved by doctrinal dismay or a flaw in the marble, one crucial aspect deserves reiteration. As we will see momentarily, there are two fundamental revisions Michelangelo instituted in his reworking of the group. The first is that the upturned head of the rearward figure in the Oxford sketch (no. 5, fig. 86) is now downturned in the sculptural group. Second, Christ's position from the waist up has been

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radically shifted in the marble group. Instead of his head being positioned directly above

the vertical right arm (which is still attached to the marble group), Christ's torso has been

pushed back into the composition against the body of the Madonna, and his head

conjoined to the volume of her figure.

4.3.3 Carving Away from the Vein: Michelangelo's Impetus for the Radical Revision

A prominent aspect of the *Rondanini Pietà's* contemporary appeal is its rough,

variegated surface, where the strokes of multiple chisel types including the *subbia* (point

chisel) and *gradina* (toothed chisel) commingle in a visual network where process

conflates with product (fig. 87). The polished areas of the initial conception of the work,

including Christ's legs and his phantom arm, contrast with the rougher areas that

necessitated revision. One effect of the rough surface, however, makes the detection of

marble veining in the block more difficult to discover, as the rough-crystalline marble is

less translucent before polished to a finish. This may explain why a dark vein running

from Christ's right groin through his left shoulder has hitherto been undetected. On the

polished surface, however, imperfections in the marble are easier to apprehend.

Upon close inspection, the polished area of Christ's right groin displays a dark

vein in the marble when viewed nearer the group's proper right side (fig. 88). From the

same vantage point, it becomes patently clear that this vein continues up the figure

passing prominently through Christ's right shoulder (fig. 89). When viewed in tandem,

the two veining patterns are discernably part of the same system (fig. 90). This

observation brings us to a problematic circumstance Michelangelo must have faced when

carving the group according to its original composition. As all of the second-type Oxford

sketches position the head of Christ directly above his right shoulder – which in the

Rondanini Pietà's final state would have been directly above the phantom limb - it

becomes immediately apparent that this vein likely ran directly through the face of Christ

(figs. 91-92).

<u>Carving Away</u>

If Michelangelo did encounter this marble vein running through the face of Christ,

we can understand the master's eminently logical decision to revise the composition to

avoid marring Christ's face. We may remember that Michelangelo abandoned the first

version of his *Risen Christ* some thirty-years before for the exact same reason.[19]

However, in the case of the *Rondanini Pietà*, the sculptor clearly felt that the composition

could be salvaged. We can perceive how, when we consider the orientation of the figures

within its original block (fig. 93).

Michelangelo carved away the marble vein of the preceding composition by

pushing Christ's torso and head back, and to the right, within the block (fig. 93). The

resultant concave arch created from the point of Christ's right shoulder down to his right

hip removed portions of the vein. The veining patterns on Christ's right groin, and now

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[19] For a discussion of the first version of the *Risen Christ*, see Alessandro Parronchi, "Il primo 'Cristo Risorto per Metello Vari," *Opere giovanili di Michelangelo* (Florence: Olschiki, 1975), 2: 157-90; Irene Baldriga, "The First Version of Michelangelo's Christ for S. Maria Sopra Minerva," in *The Burlington Magazine* 142, no. 1173 (Dec., 2000): 740-45; Silvia Danesi Squarzina, "Cristo 'Uomo dei Dolori' da Savonarola a Michelangelo," in Christoph Frommel and Gerhard Wolf, eds. *L'immagine di Cristo dall'archeropita all mano d'artista: Dal tardo medioevo all'età barocca* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2006), 241-67; Christoph Lutipold Frommel, "Michelangelos 'Auferstandener Christus', seine erste Version, und der junge Bernini," in *Artibus et Historiae* 31, no. 62, Konrad Oberhuber in memoriam: part II (2010): 15-34.

present right shoulder, are all that remains. The remaining marble towards the back right corner of the block afforded Michelangelo the opportunity to salvage his work, although the revisions necessitated a shift in iconography. No longer could the Christ's head slump above his right arm. The apparent solution was to straighten Christ from the waist up, and conjoin him vertically with the remaining mass of (what was) Nicodemus behind.

As the figural relation became more intimate between Christ and Nicodemus, and their faces came into much closer proximity, it is possible that Michelangelo thought it more suitable to transform the identity of the rearward figure to the Madonna, now shifting more closely back to the traditional motifs of the Virgin of Tenderness (*Eleousa*) (fig. 94), or more appropriately the Threnos motif of the Lamentation narratives (fig. 95), which both show Mary cheek to cheek with Christ.[20] While the Rondanini Madonna does not consummate the cheek-to-cheek motif (which may have been an impossibility to achieve), the consonant downcast gaze shared by mother and child resonates closely with the traditional motif of shared sorrow.

What we have attempted to draw into focus is the master's elegant solution to a potentially intractable problem. If Michelangelo's shift in iconography from Nicodemus to the Virgin was a response to the groups' marble vein, then the concomitant iconography associated with both figures evolved as a result of the challenge of carving. The autobiographical interpretation of the sculpture's revision - where Michelangelo

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[20] See Hans Belting's discussion of the relation between the Virgin of Tenderness (Eleousa) and Threnos scenes. Belting, *Image and Public*, 114.

seemingly repents of his supposed Nicodemism in favor of the figure of Mary who represents the Church - loses vital steam.

Which perhaps raises an even more provocative question. Why did Michelangelo continue to work on the group after he encountered the portentous vein, if the very act of revising his iconography was not directly related to a personal recantation of his supposed Nicodemism in favor of traditional Catholic dogma? The question as framed above bespeaks a line of reasoning that resonates with art historians, but less perhaps with an artist who manifests divine visions through the practical demands of his craft. One suspects that the act of carving itself, and the possibility of glimpsing a clearer view of the *salvator mundi* in the process, was really what Michelangelo may have sought. Perhaps the master continued to work on the *Rondanini Pietà* up until six days before his death, at age eighty-nine, not because he wished to erase some visual heresy, but rather to find rest via the act of non-rest. His hope was in Christ, as the artist's work and poetry attests, and near death the sculptor's sole wish was to find rest in his creator. We encounter the paradox of stasis through flux.

4.4 Paradox: Stasis through Flux

4.4.1 Letters, Poetry and Death

Living to the astonishing age for the early modern period of eighty-nine, Michelangelo had the unfortunate experience of watching many of his closest friends and family members perish. Death permeated the artist's later years as Michelangelo awaited, not always patiently, for the termination of his own life. The 1540's were particularly difficult for the sculptor in this regard. In 1546 Michelangelo's close friend and fellow

Florentine Luigi del Riccio died. A year later in 1547, his confidant and spiritual muse

Vittoria Colonna passed, who inspired much of the artist's late poetry and drawings. In

1548, one of Michelangelo's brothers, Giovan Simone died, followed in 1555 by the

death of his last surviving brother, Sigismondo, as well as the artist's beloved servant

Francesco d'Amadore, known to Michelangelo as Urbino.[21]

In a letter to Giorgio Vasari in June 1555, Michelangelo concludes his missive by

asserting, "I know that you understand in what I write that I am at the eleventh hour and

not a thought arises in me that does not have Death carved within it: but God grant that I

keep him waiting in suspense for a few years yet."[22] And indeed Michelangelo would live

nearly nine more years, until his death on 18 February 1564. Given the deaths of so many

of his dearest of friends and family, and confronted with the prospect of his impending

mortality, we can understand that Michelangelo's letter to Vasari is indicative of his

broader state of mind when the master began carving the *Rondanini Pietà*, c.1555. And

although there is no conclusive documentary evidence to support it, it is likely that this

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[21] For the fundamental information on Michelangelo's family, see *Carteggio indiretto*, I, ix-lix. See also George Bull, *Michelangelo: Life, Letters, and Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), xx-xxiv.

[22] "…io so che voi conoscete nel mio scrivere che io sono alle vente 4 ore e non nasce in me pensiero che non vi sia dentro sculpita la morte: e Dio voglia chi la tenga ancora a disagio qualche anno." Translation by Bull, *Michelangelo*, 133. This letter is dated Saturday 22 June 1555. Michelangelo, *Il carteggio indiretto di Michelangelo*, ed. Paola Barocchi and Renzo Restori, II (Florence: S.P.E.S, 1983), 35-36.

ultimate sculpture in the artist's oeuvre was intended to replace the abandoned Florentine

Pietà as the master's altarpiece for his own tomb.[23]

Themes of death also figure prominently in Michelangelo's late spiritual poetry,

where the poet expresses the sorrow of parting with concerns of the world long past, in

repentant preparation for the end:

> The fresh green years cannot imagine how much
> one's tastes and loves,
> desires and thoughts all change,
> my dear Lord, as the final steps approach.
> The soul gains more, the more it loses the world,
> and art and death do not go
> well together;
> in which, then, should I place my further hope?[24]

Form this sonnet Michelangelo indicates the struggle he faces with understanding the

value of his art when confronted with the finality of his passing from this world. And in

direct address to Christ, Michelangelo muses:

> When I conceive some image in your name,
> it's never without its equal
> attendant, death,
> at which my art and genius melt away.
> But if, as some
> believe, I can still console myself
> that one returns to life, with such a fate
> I'll serve you again, if my art comes back with me.[25]

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[23] Paoletti makes a compelling argument for this claim, given that the image of the body of Christ was a common iconography chosen by artists for their own tombs in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. See Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 68.

[24] Incomplete sonnet written in late 1552. Translated and cited from James M. Saslow, *The Poetry of Michelangelo* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 474.

[25] An incomplete sonnet of 1552. Translated by Saslow, *Poetry*, 475. Saslow suggests that Michelangelo "seems to flirt with the officially heretical idea of reincarnation," in regards to the artist's hope of "returning to life." Ibid., 475. I would posit, rather, that it is

At once Michelangelo questions, then reaffirms, his commitment to art as a vehicle to serve God, even if its value dims from the artist's perspective when peering into the precipice of death.

Our inquiry is to discern what Michelangelo could have understood himself to be doing when conceiving and carving the *Rondanini Pietà* at the twilight of his life. What consolation, if any, could his art provide in dealing with the existential tremors of impending death, and to whom were his efforts directed? Michelangelo carved the *Rondanini Pietà* for "himself" in that it was likely destined to adorn his own tomb. We should not eschew the possibility, however, that for Michelangelo at this point in his life, the act of carving was a concrete expression of his devotion and hope of salvation in Christ. Thus sculpting can be equated to praying or hymning. The content of such a kinesthetic prayer is the iconography – the act of offering the prayer is carving. Praying and hymning constitute actions, not just words.

4.4.2 Rest in Motion

A fertile means of understanding the "tenacious attachment," as Paula Carabell describes, of Michelangelo's commitment to working and reworking the *Rondanini Pietà* up until the last days of his life, can be contextualized within the Christian notion of finding rest in Christ. We can thus envisage Michelangelo "working out" his salvation as St. Paul admonishes (Phil. 2:12), through the act of carving.

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more likely Michelangelo writes of the orthodox expectation for the resurrection of the dead upon Christ's Second Coming.

As early as Plato's *Timaeus* (c. 360 BC), the ancient sage proposes, "Unless a person comes to an understanding about the nature and conditions of rest and motion, he will meet with many difficulties in the discussion which follows."[26] Plato speaks of the natural tendency of created things to move towards their creator, desiring to be unified with the eternal One, which exists in a state totally absent of motion. Motion indicates passability, corruption, and eventually, death. Stasis represents the eternal, wholly beyond change or corruption. Flux is the product of the created world – rest, the state of perfection. For a created being to reach the One, however, it must move. Plato thus speaks of rest and motion in metaphysical terms, which conceptually, are easily transmutable to physical actions.

St. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662 AD) brings the notions of motion and rest into focus within the Christian tradition that Michelangelo belonged. The saint's theologizing merits quotation at length:

> Because of Christ – or rather, the whole mystery of Christ – all ages of time and the beings within those ages have received their beginning and end in Christ. For the union between a limit of the ages and the limitless, between measure and immeasurability, between finitude and infinity, between Creator and creation, between rest and motion, was conceived before the ages. This union has been manifested in Christ at the end of time, and in itself brings God's foreknowledge to fulfillment, in order that naturally mobile creatures might secure themselves around God's total and essential immobility, desisting altogether from the movement toward themselves and toward each other.[27]

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[26] Plato, *Timaeus*, 57 d-e.

[27] Saint Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 125.

Saint Maximus presents a vision of cosmic scope, inflected by Platonic metaphysics, that posits time and eternity - motion and rest - to have their beginning and end in Christ, fleshing out St. Paul's acclamation that Christ "fills all things" (Eph. 1:23). As Maximus concludes, he asserts that naturally mobile beings, including Michelangelo and all human beings, move towards Christ's essential immobility, desisting from any other form of movement. To completely desist from all movement denotes a total state of beatitude in union with Christ.

Weary and of venerable age, both desiring and loathing death simultaneously, Michelangelo persisted in carving and recarving the *Rondanini Pietà* only days before his death. While impossible to "prove," one senses in his letters, poetry, and art that Michelangelo's "tenacious attachment" to carving the *Rondanini Pietà* may have paradoxically resided in his desire for a vision of Christ in pure rest – the destination of which *his* rest depended. In that pitiful, broken figure of Christ, Michelangelo whispers with God and to us, remembering the words relayed by the Evangelist:

> Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:28-30)

We approach a metaphysics of carving. The act, prayer like in intent and exertion, directs Michelangelo's desire for stasis in Christ through the fluctuous process of carving.

4.4.3 The *Rondanini Pietà's* Atemporality

The ambiguity of the *Rondanini Pieta's* iconography intensifies when considered within the context that the "cosmic mystery of Jesus Christ," as St. Maximus calls it, simply cannot approach full visual articulation when confined to a single narrative

"moment." We have encountered this paradigm in the *Doni Tondo* and *Risen Christ*. If

Christ possesses in himself both finitude (humanation) and infinity (divinity), then the

visual representation of a more expansive iconography in relation to Christ's life and

salvific deeds can thus begin to depict what otherwise defies visual articulation.

Michelangelo has suspended his languorous Christ between a number of

acceptable iconographic identifications: Descent from the Cross, Deposition into the

Tomb, and as several have suggested, even the Resurrection.[28] Because the groups'

movement is utterly arrested, there is no succession of time – in contrast to the *Doni*

Tondo and the *Risen Christ*.[29] Duration is perceived through implied movement. Motion

indicates temporal succession. The stillness of Christ and the Madonna at rest thus mark a

break from the master's earlier approach to activating temporal flow through implied

movement. Like the *Doni Tondo* and *Risen Christ*, Michelangelo compresses multiple

subjects into the *Rondanini Pietà's* iconography. But, crucially, he denies his figures

movement. The result is utterly iconic and atemporal.

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[28] Frederick Hartt, William E. Wallace, and Richard E. Lamoureux all suggest that the
Resurrection may be a suitable iconographic feature of the *Rondanini Pietà*. Hartt,
Michelangelo: Complete Sculpture, 300; Wallace, *Complete Sculpture, Painting,
Architecture*, 130; Lamoureux, "La Pietà Rondanini," 167-175.

[29] Regarding the sculpture's temporality, Wallace remarks, "It is difficult to describe the
subject of the sculpture: we call it a Pietà but it is radically different from the other two
versions of the same subject carved by Michelangelo [Rome *Pietà* and Florentine *Pietà*],
and unlike anything else ever made…Defying logic and gravity, Michelangelo's figures
are suspended in an impossible composition and a timeless moment." Brackets mine.
Paoletti also asserts, "Clearly whatever discrete subject was intended – if indeed any
single subject was – it was intended as a trigger to allow the viewer to unleash a much
more extensive imaginative recreation of the post-Passion temporal narrative – both
historical and metaphorical." Wallace, *Complete Sculpture, Painting, Architecture*, 130;
Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 60.

Which leads to our final question: What is the *Rondanini Pietà's* subject? The haunting figure of Christ and his towering mother remind us, perhaps, of what we already knew upon first impression. The final image the sculpture presents is simply supra-iconographic, in that it has more in common with sentiments of poetry, prayer, and hymnody than it does with any previously conceived sculptural representation of Christ.[30] As Charles de Tolnay suggests, "The external and material image of Christ and the Virgin is supplanted by an inner image inspired directly – as the Catholic Reformers would have said – by the Holy Ghost."[31] Michelangelo's chisel seems to have searched his marble for a glimpse of beatitude ultimately apprehended only by the spirit. The chisel moved to find rest as an external appendage of the artist's inner desire. The subject is Salvation.

4.5 Conclusion

Imbedded within the radical revisions Michelangelo carved into the surface of the *Rondanini Pietà* resides a story that is at once autobiographical and practical – spiritual, yet thoroughly mechanical. The fluid relationship between the material challenges of carving, and the iconographic formulation of meaning, come into focus when considering the possibility that Michelangelo revised the group due to discovering an ungainly vein in the marble. Rather than equating the master's *pentimenti* with a reformation of doctrine, it may be more productive to consider how the sculptor responded to the material

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[30] For the longstanding tradition of comparing the *Rondanini Pietà* to the non-plastic arts, see Hartt, *Michelangelo: Complete Sculpture*, 294; Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Final Period*, 92-93; Wallace, *Complete Sculpture, Painting, Architecture*, 130; Barricelli, "Michelangelo's Finito," 597-612; Paoletti, "Palimpsest," 72.

[31] Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Final Period*, 93.

challenges presented by the marble block. Upon discovering the portentous vein marring the face of Christ in the initial composition, Michelangelo chose to salvage his endeavor. The shift in form necessitated a shift in iconography. Michelangelo's final version of the sculpture, when considered through this prism, images his revisions as an elegant compositional solution, rather than an intractable spiritual problem.

As Michelangelo shifted the figure of Christ from a slumped position with the head situated directly above his right arm, to a more vertical arrangement, the figural relation between two-figure group became more intimate. The rearward figure of Nicodemus was thus reimagined as the Madonna, consolidating their familial bond in mutual suffering. The intimacy gained by carving Christ into his mother thus echoes the Virgin of Tenderness and Threnos motifs of the Lamentation narratives. Yet the iconographic result is less determinate. Christ suspended vertically, compressed in consonant rhythm with his mother, evokes a range of temporal possibilities in relation to the Deposition, Entombment and Resurrection narratives.

Michelangelo compresses multiple subjects into his figural composition, simultaneously. Yet, unlike the *Doni Tondo* or *Risen Christ*, the implied movement of his figures – particularly Christ – is utterly arrested. In contrast to our previous examples, the *Rondanini Pietà* depicts the Christ in absolute stasis. The arrest of the groups' implied movement halts the temporal succession of his narrative in an atemporal state of complete rest, thus allowing an augmented reading of the sculpture's potential autobiographical content. The Florentine *Pietà*, destined for the artist's tomb, was likely abandoned due to its controversial iconography, causing the master to smash Christ's left

leg. The *Rondanini Pietà*, perhaps also carved for the sculptor's own tomb, proposes a distinctive situation, however. Michelangelo's struggle with the stone takes on a metaphysical content as the artist sought rest for his soul in the twilight of life.

There is an appropriate affinity for relating the *Rondanini Pietà* with poetry, prayer, or even hymnody, given the sculpture's supra-classical form, and the artist's poetry fixated upon death and repentance as he glimpsed mortality's terminal pole. Sculpting as prayer takes on provocative dimensions, as ultimate rest in the beatific vision of Christ necessitates movement towards Christ's essential immobility. The metaphysical content of carving, when it is directed towards rest in Christ, culminates in an indissoluble paradox of stasis through flux, rest in motion.

Six days before his death, on the last Saturday before Lent, 12 February 1564, Michelangelo stood before the broken body of the *Rondanini Pietà's* Christ whose pitiful form must have approximated his own. Carving with no realistic hope of ever bringing the group to completion, each stroke of the chisel externalized the aural notes of internal hymnody, bending his rough figures in consonant rhythm to an ancient melody. Just beneath the marble's coarse surface emerges a vision of an immovable Christ, suspended in the stasis of beatific rest. Look patiently. The canticle Michelangelo's chisel moves to disclose may escape the ear, but is revealed to the eye. Salvation's song absent words demands silence.

Conclusion

Michelangelo was a man of his time. The intellectual history of the duplex relation of time and movement that we have traced within the philosophy of time sets the stage for an historically sensitive view towards the speculations, sentiments, and expectations of a life lived with hope in Christ. While the metaphysical, or even spiritual substance of that hope is difficult to apprehend from such a great chronological distance from then to now, we catch concentrated glimpses of it as we approach the internal logic of the primary compositions considered in this dissertation: the *Doni Tondo* (c. 1504), *Risen Christ* (1519-1520), and *Rondanini Pietà* (1555-1564). Each of these works, ultimately, takes Christ as its subject. Michelangelo treats the subject of Christ with an inventive eye that strives to capture the kerygma of the God-Man in a manner that necessitated Christ's representation in paint and marble to project beyond any single moment of time, in relation to its literary parallel from the Scriptures or liturgy. The motivation to capture Christ in a continuum is the catalyst that justifies our exploration of the temporal perceptions of the early modern era. We surmise that the challenge for Michelangelo was how to represent his Christ in a manner that could achieve a broad temporal continuum. This challenge was intellectual, but also mechanical.

The first principle set forth in chapter one of this dissertation asserts that in order to approach early modern modes of temporal perception, we must encounter contemporary modes of temporal perception in the process. Concomitant with historical inquiry, the question of temporal perception implicates both object and subject. The

pivotal moment that separates early modern modes of time perception from our own is Isaac Newton's theorization of absolute time in 1687. Absolute time, by Newton's definition, strips "time" as a concept of movement and deity. It is a mathematical formulation that promotes a vision of time that flows uniformly, unaffected by any other force in the universe. Perhaps when we think of "time", we do so in like manner. Time is a substance or experience to be managed, kept track of, and not to be wasted. But time flows by us without concern for ourselves, or anything else, for that matter. Time "marches on." As the great twentieth century cosmologist Stephen Hawking asserts, the contemporary view of time is fundamentally Newtonian.

Yet for Michelangelo and his contemporaries, time was an aspect of life that represented cosmological concerns – concerns regarding the human experience of change, decay, and the teleological and soteriological march towards Christ's Second Coming. At the Second Coming, time is halted in its tracks, and the creation with everything in it is made anew, glorified, and apportioned to its proper place. Implications of time's passage, such as change, decay, and ultimately, mortality, have their context within a predestined act of Christ's judgment at the end of the age. Thus the distinction between the eternal and the human, the transitory and unchanging, is consummated in the Christ believed to be both human and divine (temporal and atemporal). The Christian view of time, which has its beginning and end in Christ as the Alpha and Omega, was informed by a long-standing philosophical approach to time whose provenance predates the Incarnation.

In the *Timaeus*, Plato argued for a view of time as the 'moving image of eternity.' The ancient sage struck at temporal distinctions between the unmoving, unchanging Demiurge, and the material manifestations of perfect form, which comprise the cosmos, and undergo change and decay. For Plato, time *is* the movement of the heavenly spheres or planets. Plato's pupil, Aristotle, rejected a cosmological, motion-based temporality for a micro view of time that asserts time to be a succession of durationless "nows" whose enumeration is measured by movement. As expressed in his *Physics*, time as the 'number of movement in respect of before and after' envisions time to be countable, but not a product of movement itself. Although Plato and Aristotle disagree in regards to their definitions of time – both theories are circumscribed by the relation of time to movement. We know time is passing by seeing things move.

Augustine in his *Confessions* takes an alternative route by asserting that time is a phenomenon internal to the human mind or soul – a distention – where past, present, and future can be entertained simultaneously within the mind's eye. Augustine's rumination on time is highly informed by his Christian outlook, where Christ's saving deeds from an historical past can be memorialized in the present while simultaneously looking with hope to the future for their ultimate consummation. Yet Augustine, too, recognized the perplexing challenge set forth by motion-based temporality, and deferred to a biblical passage in the book of Joshua (10:12-14) to dispel the possibility of movement producing time.

The interlude of original contributions to the philosophy of time during the Renaissance frames early modern temporal perception as fundamentally retrospective.

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From Petrarch's *Trionfo del Tempo* through Savonarola's *The Triumph of the Cross*, we encounter the ancient ideas of change, corruptibility, and the fleeting nature of mortality in tandem with Christ presented as the Prime Mover who moves everything, but Himself remains ontologically unmoved. Time, therefore, was understood through a cosmological, deified lens, by which movement was the indicator of its passage. Our first principle then, is time indicates movement, and the task was then to consider how this might affect and inform Michelangelo's approach to figural narrative in relation to the artworks examined. Our first principle asserts that the implied movement of Michelangelo's figures is an indication of temporal duration, set to the task of expressing a temporal continuum in relation to the person of Christ.

The *Doni Tondo* presents Christ in bi-directional movement, liminally suspended between mother and father. The picture is fundamentally eschatological, as it depicts a pristine past in the background corrupted by sin – a middleground that present's sin's solution through the ritual cleansing of Baptism – and the foreground that stages Christ's projection beyond the picture plane into the viewer's space, at the awaited moment when the Second Coming coalesces with lived, historical reality. The *Doni Tondo's* Christ is an inventive approximation of the Ebstorf world map's schematic Christ, whose head and limbs are strewn to the four corners of the world, implying His omnipresence. Implied bidirectional movement achieves Michelangelo's omnipresent Christ, asserting at once his presence in salvation history from beginning (background) to end (viewer's space). And as we imagine Christ coming forward towards the picture plane, time follows Him,

until the perpetual present of the plane is obliterated by Christ's arrival at the end of time. Time moves as Christ moves.

The *Risen Christ*, like the *Doni Tondo*, presents a novel combination of subject matter, ultimately anchored by Christ's implied movement forward with its stepping right leg. The thematic content of the *Risen Christ* is liturgical and Eucharistic. Anamnesis is the overarching subject of the sculpture that underpins its Eucharistic content. By sculpting the figure's base as an ellipse, Michelangelo invites the viewer to behold his creation from multiple vantage points, culminating in the Eucharistic View when seen from Christ's proper left side. The practice of viewing Christ's body as Eucharistic presence is rooted in the theological conviction that the consecrated Host, although appearing as bread and wine, is nonetheless the True Presence of Christ. Michelangelo's Christ unites substance (*substantia*) and accidents (*accidens*) in the miracle of Transubstantiation, where Christ's forward movement consummates his Eucharistic identity as *transitus domini*. The anamnetic continuum of Christ's identity is activated as he "passes by."

The *Rondanini Pietà's* iconographic fabric is diverse, as it depicts the discreet subjects of the Descent from the Cross, the Entombment, and even the Resurrection, simultaneously. Yet unlike the *Doni Tondo* and the *Risen Christ*, Michelangelo suspends all active movement of his figures. If we understand the movement of Christ in the previous two works as an indication of temporal progression and duration, the opposite is true of the *Rondanini Pietà*. Michelangelo flips the narrative 'coin' to its reverse, emphasizing total stability and stasis in his beatific vision of Christ. The sculptor's

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dogged attachment to the group embodies his commitment to carving as a means of finding rest. The act of carving itself takes on metaphysical content as the artist sought to resolve his composition when faced with discovering an unsightly vein running through the face of Christ in the group's initial conception. Rather than a dogmatic recantation, the master's continued work on the *Rondanini Pietà* takes the form of kinesthetic hymnody as he searches for salvation beneath the surface of obdurate stone. In the absence of implied movement, the *Rondanini Pietà* achieves timelessness.

The technical abilities of Michelangelo as painter and sculptor showcase the master's aptitude for realizing his artistic visions within the delimitations each medium dictates. In painting, implied movement through illusionistic space achieves the *Doni Tondo's* temporal continuum. The implied movement of the Christ child, importantly, is perpendicular to the picture plane, as a means to directly engage and implicate the viewer in the painting's content. The *Risen Christ* manipulates multiple points of view, necessitating the viewer to move around the sculpture, as Michelangelo conceals and reveals vital iconographic content from one vantage point to the next. And the *Rondanini Pietà* showcases Michelangelo's ability, even in old age, to negotiate an aborted composition by carving back into the block. Michelangelo thinks within the medium, and this, as much as his inventiveness, may be where his genius resides.

There are other candidates in Michelangelo's corpus that may benefit from the first principle we have sought to establish. The *Creation of Adam* (1508-1512) and the *Last Judgment* (1536-1541) frescos in the Sistine Chapel, as well as his late frescos in the Pauline Chapel (1542-1549) are complex works that present novel iconographic features

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that may indicate a temporal continuum rather than a *punctum temporis*. Such analysis would require intensive engagement with each subject to build upon the excellent, and abundant, scholarship associated with each painting.

History's value resides not only in understanding the past, but engaging ourselves in the present upon encountering aspects of a previous age both alien and familiar. Investigating the interrelation of time and movement in the historical philosophy of time thus strives to realize a dual purpose: to engage Michelangelo's narrative sensibility, and to encounter our own temporal perceptions in the process. While our post-Newtonian sense of time might present initial obstacles to perceiving time as invested with movement and imbued with deity, we need but only look. Michelangelo affords the opportunity to enter into the river of time, where although we may never step in the same water twice, we nonetheless partake in a continuum whose ancient origins rush towards a terminal pole that remains, as yet, still out of view.

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Figure 1. Raphael, *School of Athens*, 1509-1511, fresco, 16 1/2 x 25 ft. Stanza della Segnatura, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 2. George Pencz, *The Triumph of Time, plate four from The Triumphs of Petrarch*, c. 1539, engraving in black on ivory laid paper, 151 x 210 mm. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

Figure 3. Carlo Francesco Bizzacheri, *Tomb of Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini*, erected 1705, marble. San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome.

Figure 4. Detail of shattered, winged-hourglass. *Tomb of Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini*.

Figure 5. Michelangelo, *Doni Tondo*, c. 1504, oil and tempera on panel, 47 ½ in. diameter. Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 6. Ebstorf world map, 13th century, goat skin, 12 ft. x 12 ft. Found in 1843 in the convent of Ebstorf, Germany. Lost during WWII.

Figure 7. Fra Bartolomeo, *Girolamo Savonarola*, c. 1498, oil on wood,18 ½ in. x 12 ½ in. Museo di San Marco, Florence.

Figure 8. Domenico Benivieni, *Tractato di Maestro Domenico Benivieni…in defensione et probatione della doctrina et profethie predicate da Frate Hieronimo da Ferrara nella citta di Firenze*. Florence: Sir Francesco Bonaccorsi for Piero Pacini, 28 May 1496, fol. f.iii.verso.

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Figure 9. Masaccio, *Baptism of Neophytes*, 1424-27, fresco. Santa Maria del Carmine, Brancacci Chapel, Florence.

Figure 10. Michelangelo, *Doni Tondo* (detail), Leftward nude duo.
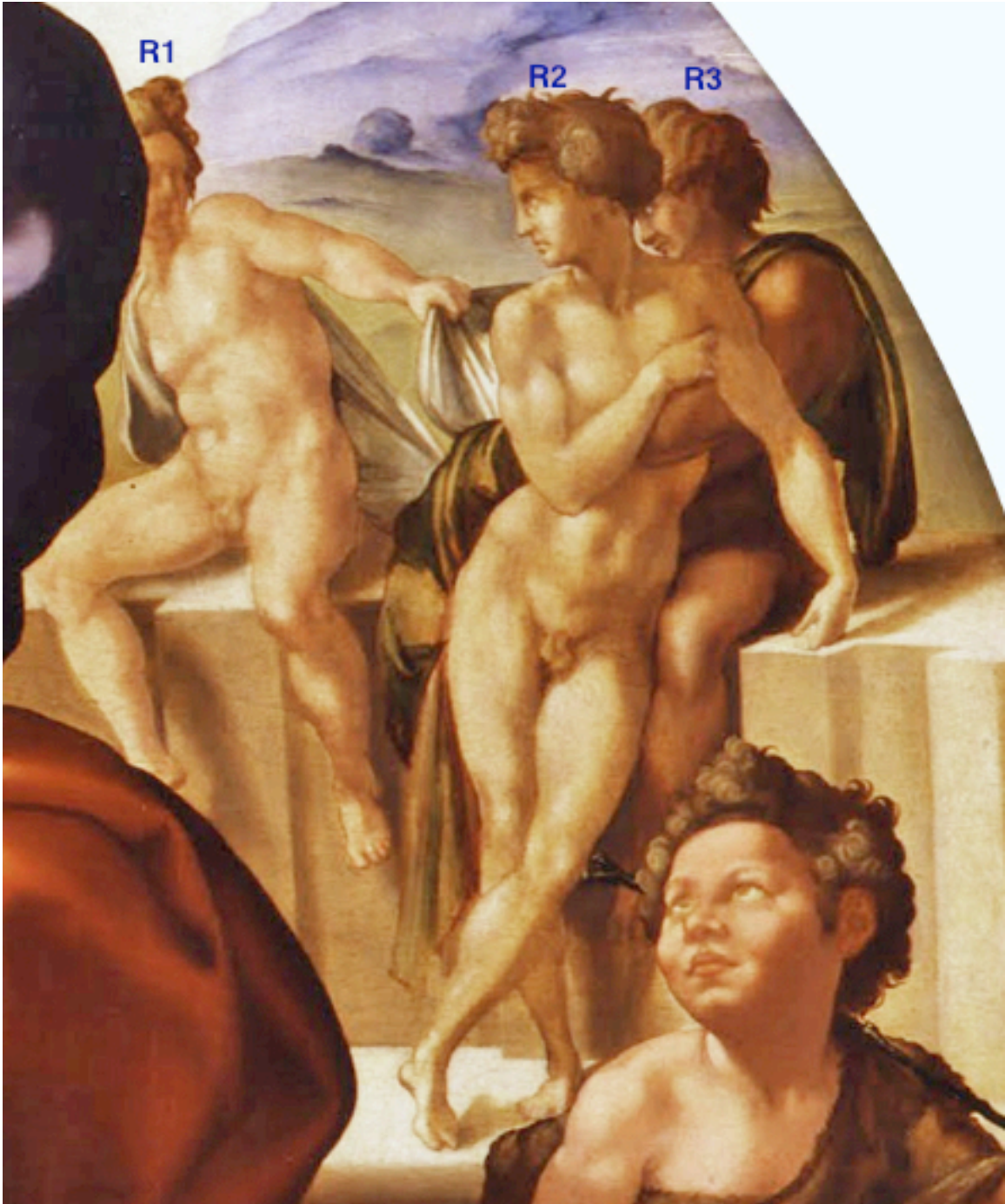
Figure 11. Michelangelo, *Doni Tondo* (detail), Rightward nude trio.

Figure 12. Raphael and assistants, *Baptism of Constantine*, 1517-24, fresco. Apostolic Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 13. Bramante, *Tempietto*, 1502. San Pietro in Montorio, Rome.

Figure 14. Pedro Fernández de Murcia, *Vision of the Blessed Amedeo Meneses Silva*, c. 1512-14, oil on panel, 9 ft. x 10 ½ ft. Palazzo Barberini, Rome.

Figure 15. Michelangelo, *Doni Tondo* with frame.

Figure 16. Daniele da Volterra, *Assumption of the Virgin*, c. 1555, fresco. Santissima Trinità dei Monti, Rome.

Figure 17. Michelangelo, *Risen Christ*, 1519-20, marble, 208 cm. high (6 ft. 10 in.). Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome.

Figure 18. *Risen Christ*, Detail of stepping right foot.

Figure 19. *Risen Christ*, view from proper left side, termed "Eucharistic View.
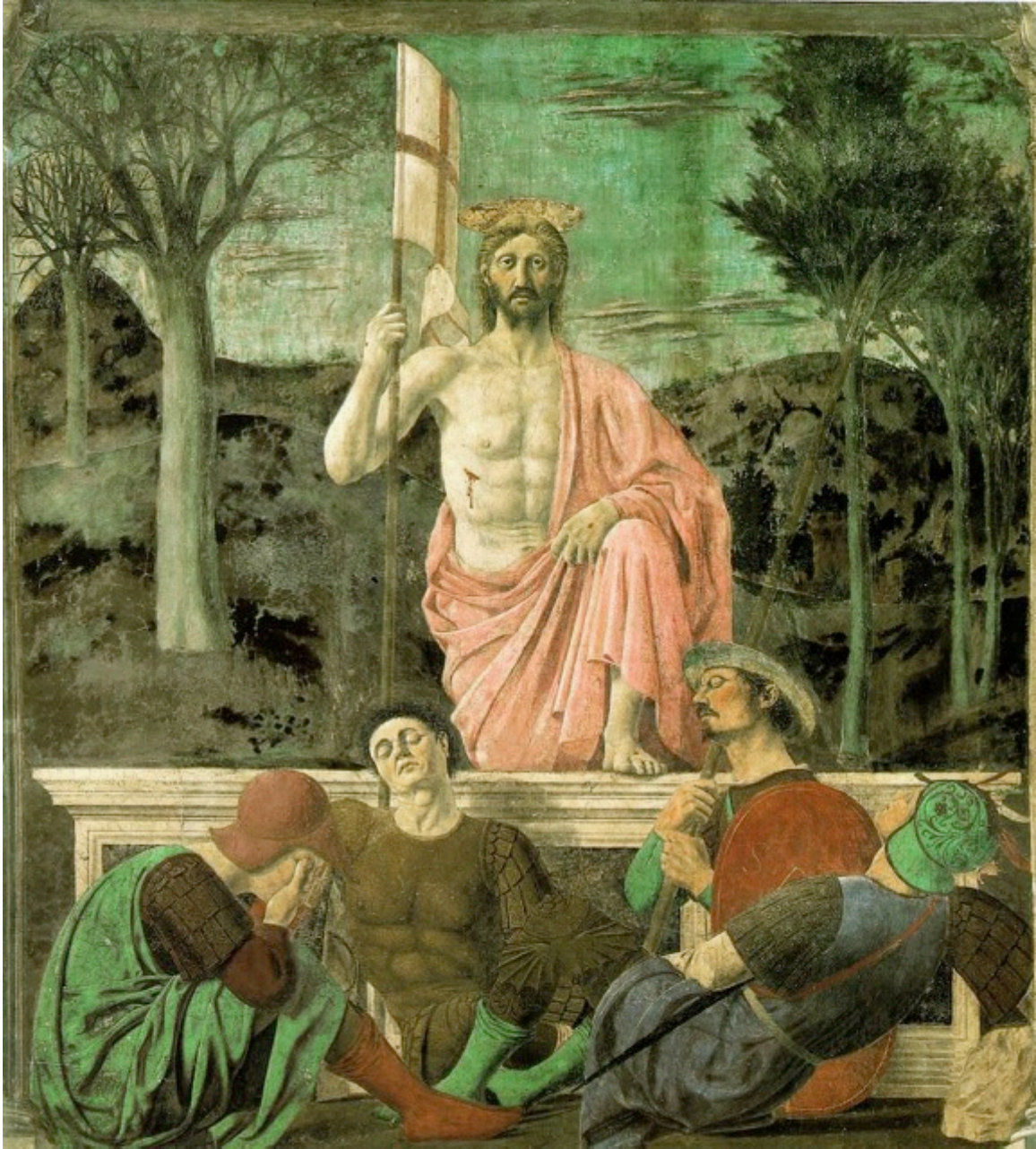
Figure 20. Piero della Francesca, *Resurrection*, c. 1463-65, fresco, 225 x 200 cm (7 ½ x 6 ½ ft.), Museo Civico, Sansepolcro.
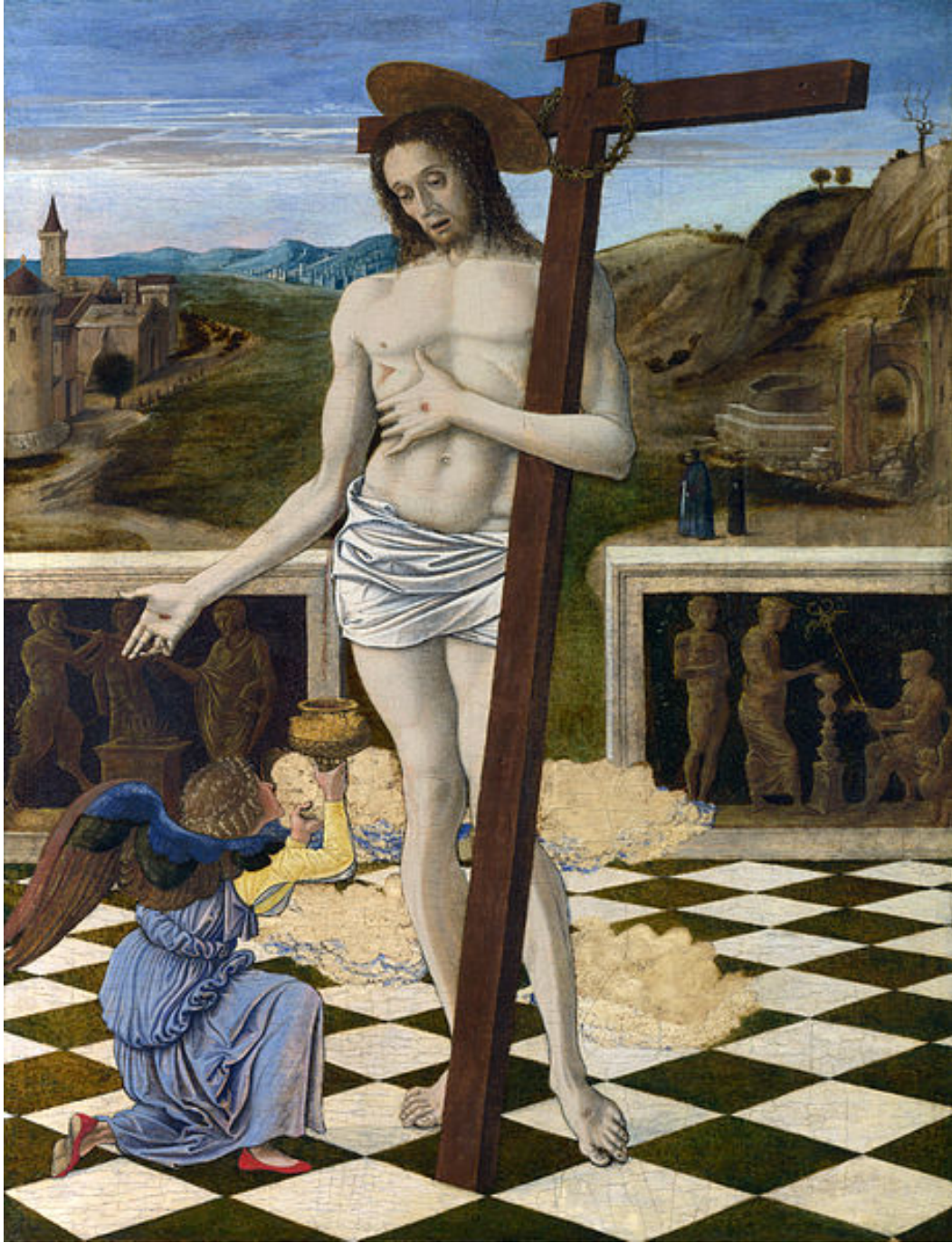
Figure 21. Giovanni Bellini, *The Blood of the Redeemer*, c. 1460-65, tempera on panel, 47 x 34.3 cm, National Gallery, London.

Figure 22. Vecchietta, *Risen Christ*, 1476, bronze, 183 cm., atop the ciborium of the Chiesa dell'Ospedale della Scala, Siena.

Figure 23. Albrecht Dürer, *Ascension*, c. 1511, woodcut, from the *Small Passion* series.

Figure 24. Johann Koerbecke, *The Ascension*, 1456-57, oil on wood, 92.7 x 64.7 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Figure 25. *Risen Christ*, detail (top), view of base's plane from proper right side.

Figure 26. *Risen Christ*, detail (middle), view of base's frontal notch.

Figure 27. *Risen Christ*, detail (bottom), view of base's plane from proper left side.

Figure 28. Michelangelo, *Bacchus*, 1496-97, marble, 203 cm. high (80 in.), Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

Figure 29. *Bacchus*, detail through eyelet of cup.

Figure 30. *Bacchus*, from first intermediate view.

Figure 31. *Bacchus*, two figures in profile.
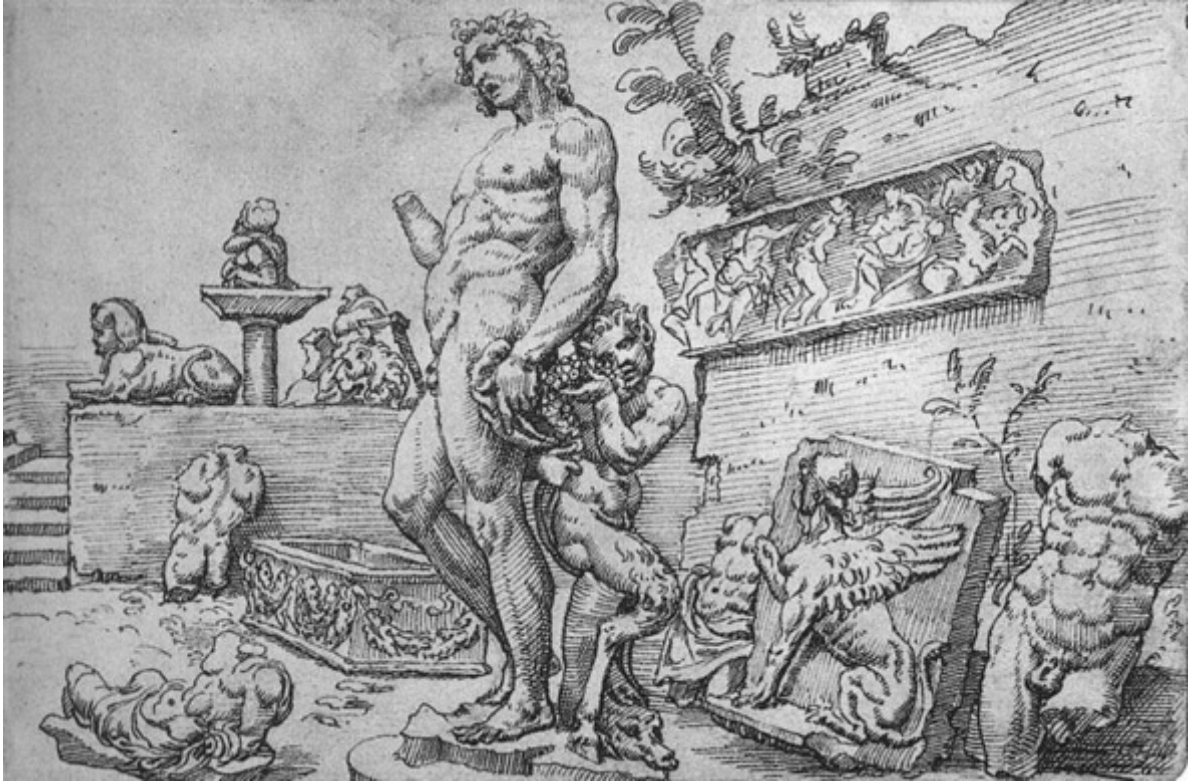
Figure 32. Maarten van Heemskerck, *Drawing of the Bacchus*, c. 1533-36, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin.

Figure 33. *Bacchus*, from second intermediate view.

Figure 34. *Bacchus*, with satyr directly behind Bacchus' proper left leg.

Figure 35. *Bacchus*, view from reverse.

Figure 36. *Dying Gaul*, Roman copy of 3rd c. BC Hellenistic work, marble. Musei Capitolini, Rome.

Figure 37. *Dying Gaul*, detail of sword (top).

Figure 38. *Dying Gaul*, detail of horn (bottom).

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Figure 39. Michelangelo, *David*, 1501-04, marble, 14 ft. high, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.

Figure 40. *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, view from rear, 1st c. BCE, marble, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome.

Figure 41. *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, view from front.

Figure 42. *Bacchus*, detail of broadside of original block from Bacchus' proper left side (top).

Figure 43. *Bacchus*, detail of broadside of original block from Bacchus' proper right side (bottom).

Figure 44. *Bacchus*, detail of narrow side of original block from frontal position (top).

Figure 45. *Bacchus*, detail of narrow side of original block from rear position (bottom).

Figure 46. *Bacchus*, reconstruction of the figure's orientation within the original block, premised upon the planes of the base (Figs. 42-45). Michelangelo began carving the group from the front corner of the block.

Figure 47. *Risen Christ*, view from proper right side.

Figure 48. *Risen Christ*, detail of reed, rope, and sponge (*arma christi*).

Figure 49. *Risen Christ*, view from frontal position.

Figure 50. *Risen Christ*, detail of proper right foot at the frontal plane of the base.

Figure 51. *Risen Christ*, view from proper left side, termed 'Eucharistic View' (same as Fig. 19).

Figure 52. *Risen Christ*, detail of Christ's gaze from 'Eucharistic View.'

Figure 53. *Risen Christ*, detail of back and unfinished state of proper right scapula and flank.
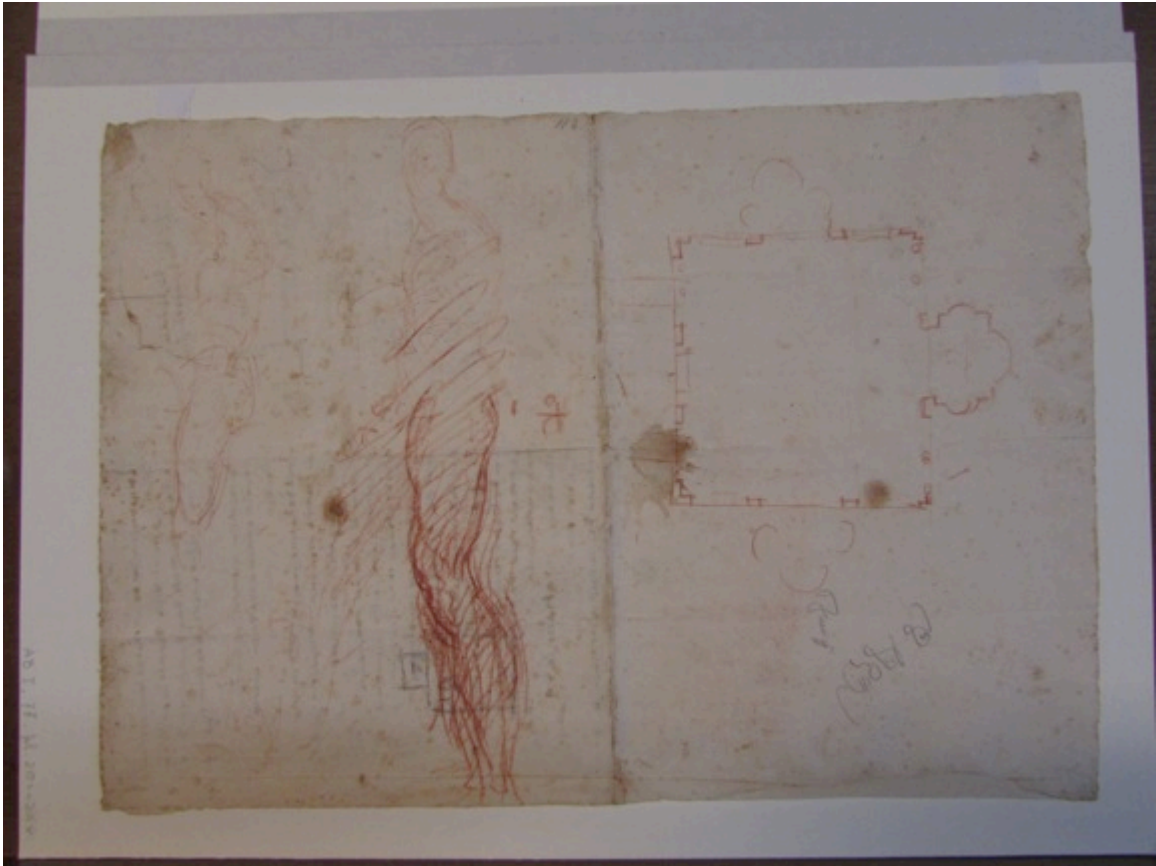
Figure 54. Michelangelo, *Risen Christ* sketch, c. 1519-20, *sanguine* on paper, A B I, 77. fol. 210r - 211v, Archivio Buonarroti, Florence.

Figure 55. *Risen Christ* sketch, detail of figure with crossing proper left arm and stepping proper right leg.

Figure 56. *Risen Christ*, detail of flat back plane of base, viewed from proper left side.

Figure 57. *Risen Christ* (left), reconstruction of the figure's orientation within the block; *Risen Christ* sketch (right), showing sketch as preparation for Michelangelo's initial approach of the block at the front corner.

Figure 58. Monstrance, late 15th century, German, gilded silver, enamel, pearls, and glass
cylinder, 44.5 x 7.9 cm., Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis. The Consecrated Host
would be placed within the central glass cylinder.

Figure 59. Rogier van der Weyden, *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece*, 1445-50, oil on panel, 200 x 223 cm., Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, Antwerp.
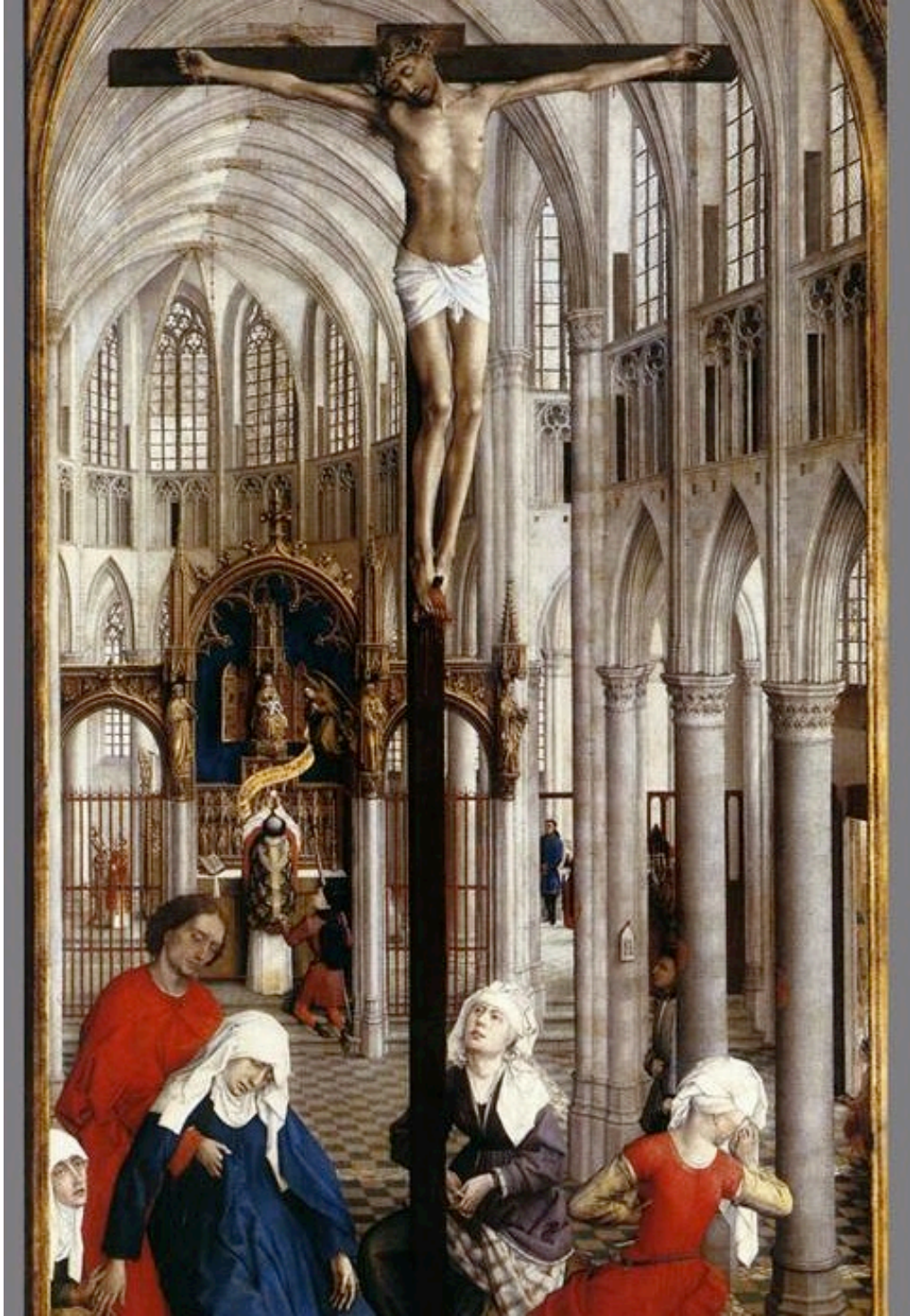
Figure 60. Rogier van der Weyden, *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece*, detail of central panel.

Figure 61. Raphael, *Mass at Bolsena*, Stanza di Eliodoro, 1512, fresco, 660 cm (21 ½ ft.) wide, Palazzo Apostolico, Vatican City.

Figure 62. Raphael, *Mass at Bolsena*, detail of Host miracle at the altar.

Figure 63. Fra Bartolommeo, *Salvator Mundi*, 1516, oil on panel, 282 x 203.5 cm. Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.
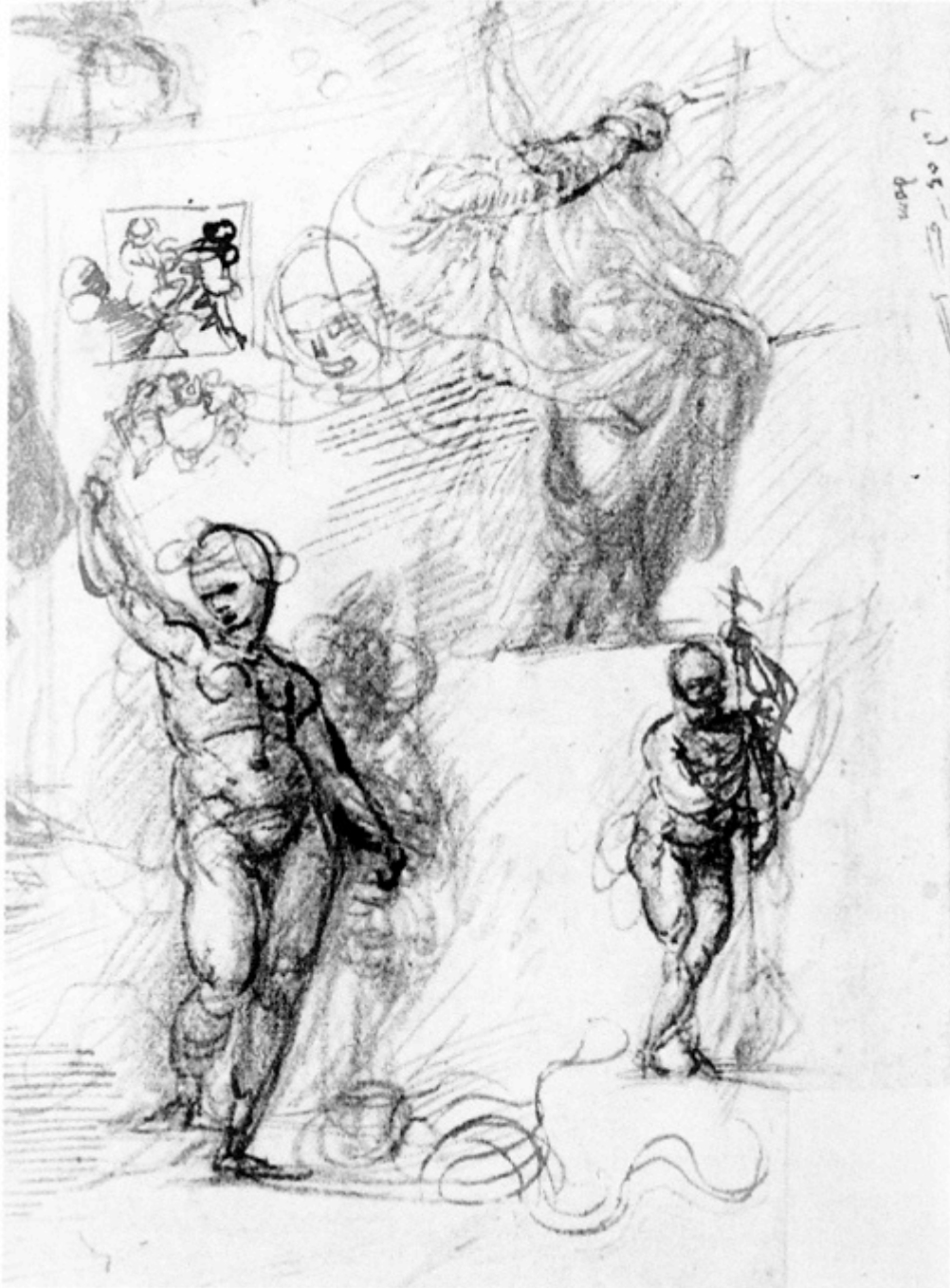
Figure 64. Fra Bartolommeo, studies for the *Salvator Mundi* (detail), 1516, chalk, pen and ink, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

Figure 65. Raphael, *Disputa*, 1509-10, fresco, 770 x 500 cm. (25 x 16.5 ft.), Palazzo Apostolico, Vatican City.

Figure 66. *Disputa*, detail emphasizing the vertical axis between the central figures when viewed from eye level.

Figure 67. *Disputa*, detail of monstrance and Host (top).

Figure 68. *Disputa*, detail of Crucifixion on Host (bottom).

Figure 69. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà*, c. 1555-1564, marble, 6 ft. 4 in. high.
Castello Sforzesco, Milan.

Figure 70. Detail of *Rondanini Pietà* with the floating right arm from an earlier stage of the group's composition.

Figure 71. Michelangelo, sheet of drawings showing five versions of a *Pietà* group, c. 1550-1555, black chalk on off-white paper, 180 x 281 mm. The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Figure 72. Michelangelo, Florentine *Pietà*, 1547-1553, marble, 7 3/4 ft. high. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence.

Figure 73. Michelangelo, Rome *Pietà*, 1498-1499, marble, 6 ft. 4 in. high. Basilica di San Pietro, Vatican.

Figure 74. Fra Angelico, *Entombment* (formerly the central panel of the predella of the San Marco Altarpiece), 1440, tempera on panel, 46 x 38 cm. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Figure 75. Jacopino del Conte, *Pietà*, c. 1550, oil on canvas, 180 x 129 cm. Palazzo Barberini, Rome.

Figure 76. Taddeo Zuccari, *Pietà with Angels*, 1560, oil on canvas, 212 x 124 cm. Galleria Borghese, Rome.

Figure 77. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà*, frontal view.

Figure 78. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà*, with detail of the original flat plane of the rectangular block at the base.
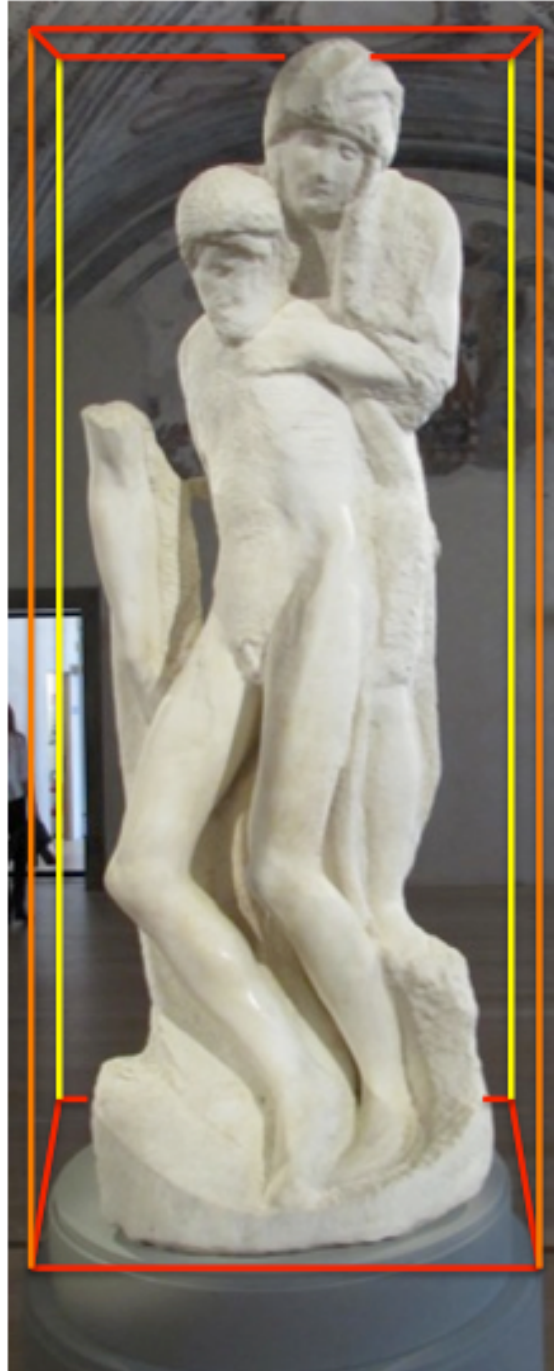
Figure 79. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà* with a reconstruction of the original parameters of the marble block. The red lines represent the top and bottom of the block. The orange lines represent the frontal edges of the block. The yellow lines represent the rearward edges of the block.

Figure 80. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà*, view of figures within the original orientation of the block, viewed from the proper right side.

Figure 81. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà*, detail of exposed left leg of the Virgin.

Figure 82. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà*, vantage point from the proper right side.

Figure 83. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà*, vantage point from proper left side.

Figure 84. Michelangelo, *Rondanini Pietà*, viewed from rear vantage point.

Figure 85. Michelangelo, sheet of drawings showing five versions of a *Pietà* group, c. 1550-1555, black chalk on off-white paper, 180 x 281 mm. The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Numerical sequencing of the proposed order of execution.

Figure 86. The *Rondanini Pietà* and the Oxford Sketch (no. 5, far left of sheet), compared. The figures when viewed from the frontal plane of the marble block correspond closely to the Oxford sheet, no. 5 iteration of the *Rondanini Pieta's* initial composition.

Figure 87. Detail of the *Rondanini Pietà's* rough surface.

Figure 88. *Rondanini Pietà*, detail of dark veining pattern on Christ's right groin.

Figure 89. *Rondanini Pietà,* detail of dark veining pattern on Christ's right shoulder.
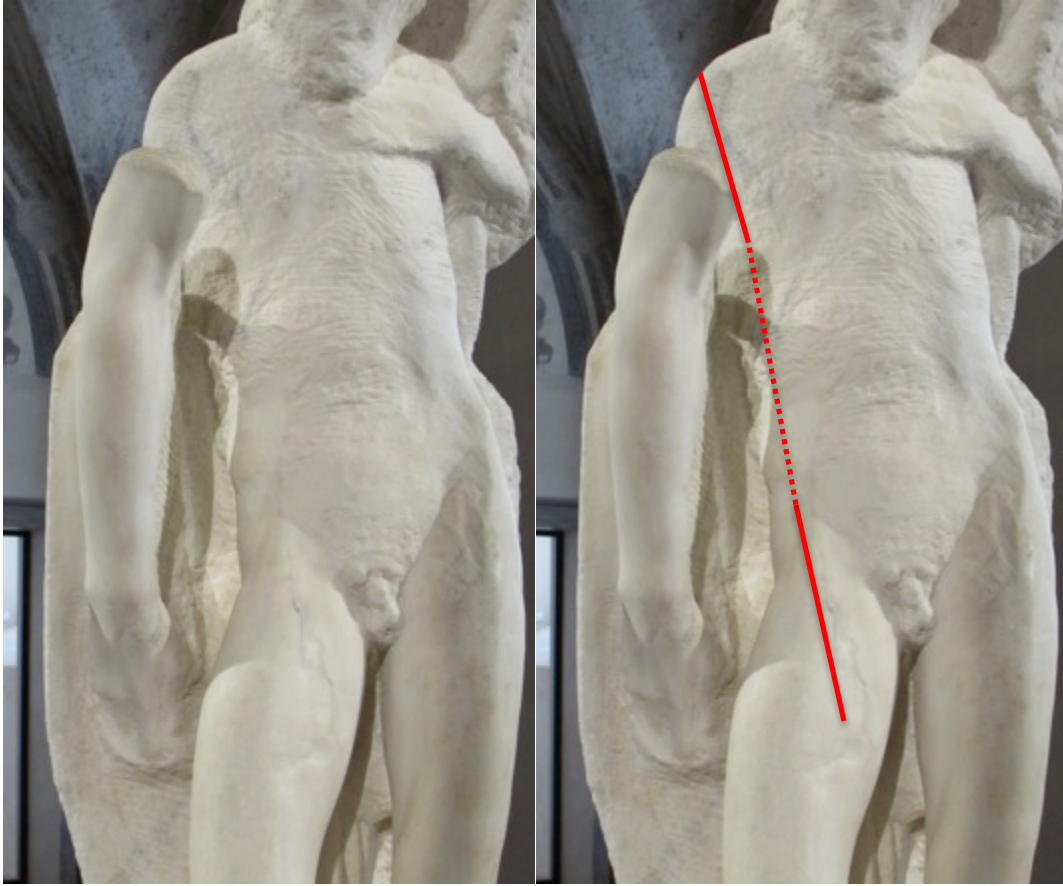
Figure 90. *Rondanini Pietà*, side-by-side view of Christ with and without red indicating line of veining system. The upper and lower solid red lines indicate the remaining veining pattern. The dotted red line connecting them indicates the region Michelangelo carved out.

Figure 91. *Rondanini Pietà*, reconstruction of the marble vein's trajectory through the face of Christ, based upon the Oxford Sheet's head-over-shoulder motif of Christ (nos. 3,4,5). The remainder of the bicep, the shoulder, and the head are positioned above the phantom arm of the marble group to simulate the vein's passage across Christ's face from the original composition. The solid red lines denote extant marble veining, and the dotted lines represent the veining that has been carved away.

Figure 92. Oxford Sheet, sketch no. 3, with veining pattern superimposed upon the sketch in correspondence to the veining present on the marble group. The solid red lines indicate extant veining on the marble group. The dotted red lines indicate marble veining that has been carved away on the marble group.

Figure 93. *Rondanini Pietà*, reconstruction of Michelangelo's strategy of pushing the figure of Christ back, and to the right within the marble block, away from the front edge of the block denoted in blue. The dotted yellow line represents the concavity created from Michelangelo carving back and away from the vein.

Figure 94. Raphael, *Madonna della Sedia*, 1513-1514, oil on panel, 71 x 71 cm. Palazzo Pitti, Florence. Example of Raphael's Renaissance rendition of the Eleousa motif.

Figure 95. Master of Nerezi, *Lamentations*, 1164, fresco. Church of St. Panteleimon, Gorno Nerezi, Macedonia.