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"*Ratio Quique Reddenda*" — what did Sweerts mean?*

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The Portrait of a Young Man, or Self-Portrait, by Michael Sweerts, remains poorly studied, although this is one of the two known works, dated by the master himself, and dated 1656, a pivotal year in his biography. Beside the date the sheet pinned to the green tablecloth displays the signature and the moralizing motto: *Ratio Quique* [*sic*!] *Reddenda*. Titled as "The Bankrupt" the painting appeared in the collection of I. I. Shuvalov and with this apparently false title went first to the St Petersburg Academy of Arts, then to the Hermitage. The reading of it as belonging to the vanitas genre also leads away from the point. That the Young Man is not a frivolous embezzler, but a calculating businessman follows from parallels in Flemish and Dutch art. Neither is he a "melancholic", however similar his posture may be to many of them. The key to Sweerts' message is the Latin pinacogram, of which each word is capitalized and one is spelled in a somewhat extravagant manner (dat. *quique*). *Rationem reddere* evokes associations with the Gospel debt parables. Flemish painters had turned to this subject already in the early 16th century; Van Hemessen's depiction of the Unforgiving Slave is likely to be one of Sweerts' direct sources. The parallelism of earthly and heavenly "banking" is emphasized in Th. Halle's engraving *Redde rationem* being part of *Veridicus Christianus* by J. David. The engraving and the portrait have a number of details in common, and the relative comment abounds in references to the debt parables. The Young Banker of the Hermitage portrait puts aside his counting and muses that the same debit-credit law operates in the other world, and that the list of debtors includes every one of us: to get that message across was so important to the fanatically catholic Sweerts that he styled the Latin inscription as the title of this list.

Keywords: Sweerts, Portrait of a Young Man, Latin pinacograms.

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Fig. 1. Michael Sweerts, Portrait of a Young Man
(Sokolova 1988, 114)

From the canvas a young man is looking at us thoughtfully. He sits in a *pensieroso* pose, a cheek on his hand (Fig. 1). His other hand adorned with a ring on the little finger clutches a folded sheet of paper. He is dressed beautifully, but modestly, and his whole appearance — long hair, delicate hands, lush sleeves of a white shirt protruding from under a black cloak, his tilted face with a somewhat distracted look — gives an impression of a romantic youth, so that one would hardly guess that the portrait belongs to a master of the mid-17th century. In front of him on the table there is a coin pouch tied with embroidered cord, and rows of a few overlapping gold coins laid out for counting. A steel inkwell with two quills stands at the very edge of the table, and even protrudes a little. The sitter is leaning on a wooden box, perhaps a cash tray, counting books are piled on its top. To the dark green tablecloth which goes all way to the ground a piece of paper is pinned with a golden pin near the edge of the table, beneath the inkpot. Inscribed on it are the date *A. D. 1656* (at the top in the middle), the sphragis *Michael Sweerts F.* [= *fecit* or *faciebat*] (at the bottom right, very small), and below the date, as if the title of some list that has yet to be compiled, three more words *Ratio Quique Reddenda* (Figs 2–3). The sheet directly opposes the viewer, conceived as an essential part of the painting, and the pithy Latin inscription garbles somehow with the pensive expression of the Youth.

There is no question about who this young man is by his occupation: the *Portrait of a Young Banker* by Jan Gossaert (also referred to as the *Merchant*, ca 1530, now in the National Gallery of Art, Washingon) and the *Portrait of a Thirty-Four-Year-Old Banker* by

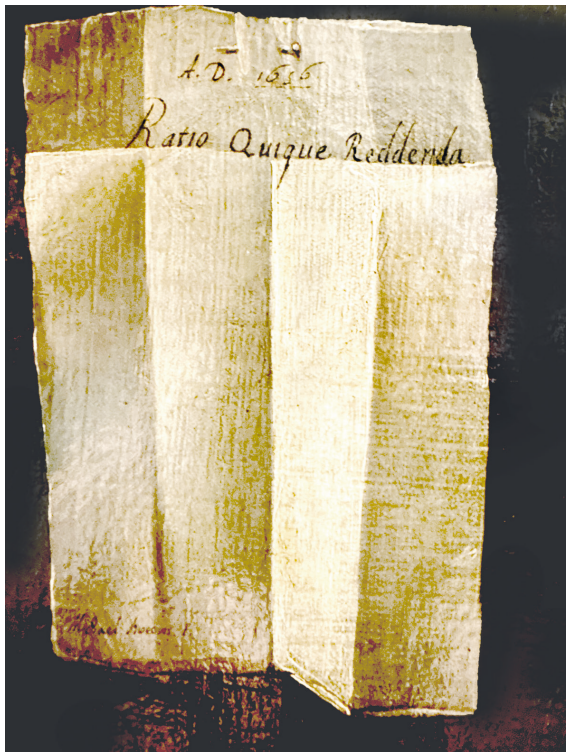

Fig. 2. Portrait of a Young Man (detail)

Fig. 3. Portrait of a Young Man (detail)

Maarten van Heemskerck (1539, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) provide eloquent parallels: the same ring on the little finger, the same office books, papers, letters pinned to the wall (*Alrehande missiven* and *Alrehande minuten*), writing utensils and stacks of coins in the foreground (Figs 4–5). The two portraits are cited to elucidate the subject matter of the *Tax Collectors* attributed to Quinten Massys in a very informative essay by Larry Silver.[1] While Silver includes in his analysis early and mid 17th century painting (Rembrandt's *Moneychanger* and *Goldweigher*; Vermeer's *Woman Balancing Scales*), he does not recall

[1] Silver 2015. The painting was thought to belong to the follower of Marinus van Reymerswaele.

Fig. 4. Jan Gossaert, Portrait of a Young Banker (Silver 2015, 6)

Fig. 5. Maarten van Heemskerck, Portrait of a 34-Year-Old Banker (Silver 2015, 6)

Sweerts' work, and little is written about it at all. Yet, Silvers findings imply that the *Portrait of a Young Man* belongs to a certain thematic trend of Dutch and Flemish genre painting started presumably by Massys (*Moneychanger and His Wife*, 1514) and continued by a number of artists, including Van Reymerswaele, whose misers, money-dealers and tax collectors are many and widely known, and, among Sweerts' contemporaries, David III Ryckaert, Salomon Koninck, Pieter de Hooch, Vermeer and Rembrandt.

The portrait was part of the I. I. Shuvalov collection, purchased by Catherine II for the St Petersburg Academy of Arts in 1763 and cataloged by K. I. Golovachevsky in 1773.[2] Listed as "Bankrupt", it still bore this title in 1922, when it was transferred to the Hermitage.[3] Very possibly, it was sold to Shuvalov as the "Portrait of a Bankrupt" by one of the art dealers for whom the mid-18th-century Petersburg was an attractive place. In whose hands it was during the hundred years after its creation, remains so far unknown, but whoever entitled it so, either had poor knowledge of the tradition or was misled by some legend coming from former owners, probably, from Sweerts' friends or his students — because for some time it must have been kept in the art school he founded. Anyway, this interpretation was questioned already in the early 20th century[4] and now seems to have vanished from inventories, unless some tour guide wishes to revive it.

The fact that the portrait depicts a person professionally dealing with money, is further confirmed by the life circumstances of the painter, who, while staying in Rome (until 1652 or 1654), alongside with his artistic endeavors acted as a sales agent for the silk merchant Jan Deutz and bought art for the Pamphili family.[5] He then opened his own art academy in Brussels.[6] There is enough evidence that the Young Man in the Hermitage portrait is Sweerts himself.[7] In the 42 years of his life, he produced at least five self-portraits; only Rembrandt displays more interest in the genre. One of the most famous self-representations of Sweerts (now in Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin) shows the artist in his main professional capacity, with brushes and palette. Here, he is dressed the same way as the Young Man, an external resemblance is noticeable and it is dated the same year, 1656, Sweerts' most active year at Brussels. The desire of the artist, who taught painting and

[2] Bogdan 2020 [И. И. Шувалов — основатель музея Академии художеств], 25: «Свертс. Банкрот. Головачевский. № 23. Шверц; Кат. 1874. № 537. — Михиль Свертс. Банкрот. 1656. 25×21 верш.; Кат. ГЭ. Михиель Свертс (1624–1664). Портрет молодого человека (поколенный). Х., м., 114×92. Инв. № 3654. Пост. в 1922 г. ».

[3] Levinson-Lessing 1958 [Государственный Эрмитаж. Отдел западноевропейского искусства: каталог живописи. Т. 2], 69. The catalog card contains embarrassing inaccuracies and outdated biographical notes.

[4] Neustroyev 1907, 38: „*Das Bild trägt den Namen: „Der Bankerott", jedoch nicht ganz mit Recht, denn aus dem Gesichtsausdrucke des jungen Bankiers kann man wohl eine Besorgnis für die* ratio cuique reddenda *herauslassen, die jedoch auch bei normalen Verhältnissen eines Bankgeschäftes stattfindet und keineswegs auf irgend welche Geldverlegenheit deutet.*"

[5] He was himself the son of a rich linen merchant and belonged to Flemish aristocracy: see the article by Tom van der Molen in AKL, https://www.degruyter.com/database/AKL/entry/_00155595/html (accessed: 20.12.2023). For Sweerts' biography see Martin 1907 and Bloch 1968. The information on his life and work, with further references, is also to be found in: Waddingham 1976 and 1980, and especially in the detailed monographic study by Rolf Kultzen (1996).

[6] This school and his pupils he often painted. The *Drawing School* and *Pupils Drawing and Painting*, published and commented on by W. Martin (1905, 128), no less than other paintings by Sweerts, show the extent to which his work is imbued with an autobiographical element.

[7] It is not at all clear what Wolfgang Stechow (1951, 211) is basing his argument on when he asserts categorically (italics his own): "It is almost certain that the Leningrad portrait does *not* represent the painter himself."

made genre portraits for educational purposes (cf. his series of *The Five Senses*), to present himself also in his other occupation, as a "Banker", or "Merchant", is quite understandable. The bankers in Gossaert's and Heemskerck's portraits do not look the least bit caricatured, so the rules of the genre did not oblige Sweerts to bring in this self-image any negative traits. What he contributes is, first of all, a deep, serious yet a bit dreamy expression. The other bankers look simply grave, not a shadow of abstract thoughtfulness in them. Sweerts shifts the emphasis from socially representative qualities to some psychological level, the key to which, and hence to the whole picture, is to be sought in the inscription.

Before turning to this curious pinacogram, a word about the existing conceptions of the portrait should be added, which, we repeat, are quite few. Strangely, this masterpiece belonging to an artist of whose brush not so many finished works have survived, and moreover, with an inscription which allows for correlations at variance with the visual content, has never been the subject of an independent study.[8] Actually, apart from the obviously false idea of a "bankrupt", only one interpretation has been proposed so far: The Young Man is seen as an archetypal "melancholic". Hans-Joachim Raupp and Ruddy Van Leeuwen fit him into a series of images which depict a person in "melancholic state of mind".[9] The main reason for this convergence is the position of the head: the characters often prop their head up with a palm or fist quite similar to how it is depicted by Sweerts. The head is propped up, because it has become too heavy with melancholic thoughts. Van Leeuwen assumes that this whole tradition comes mainly from Dürer's celebrated *Melencolia I* (cf. his *Christ as the Man of Sorrows*, *Saint Jerome* and *Job on the Dungheap*), while Raupp also points to Dürer's forerunners — Michelangelo with his *Lorenzo pensieroso* and Raphael, who in the *School of Athens* depicts Michelangelo in Lorenzo's posture. Dürer's influence was indeed enormous, and the concept became popular with artists, who imagined and portrayed themselves as "melancholics".[10] Sweerts may well have fallen under this influence, especially since the heavy thoughts actually troubled him. In another famous, and very expressive, self-portrait of later date (ca 1660–1661, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston) the artist is holding the vanitas symbol; with a startled look, he points at the skull, having almost put his finger into the nasal cavity. Keeping this parallel in mind Irina Sokolova considered our painting also belonging to the vanitas genre: "The old books, empty purse, gold coins and inkwell are all typical symbols of vanitas and are seen in many Dutch still lives that express the transitoriness of earthly existence." [11] But just as leaning on the cheek does not make a person necessarily melancholic,[12] neither do books, purse and inkwell necessari-

[8] The Hermitage does not realize its true value either: the painting hangs in a corner, the approach to it is impeded by a precious armchair next to it. The state of preservation of the portrait can hardly be called ideal. It has not been restored for a long time, and is all blackened, the objects so important for understanding the artist's idea are poorly recognizable, the signature barely legible. Meanwhile, among ca hundred known works by Sweerts only this and the *Draughts Players* from Rijksmuseum (cf. below, n. 23) are dated by himself. As to the place of creation, Waddingham (1976, 65) doubts not that "despite its Dutch intonations", the portrait was painted in Brussels.

[9] Raupp 1984, 230; Van Leeuwen 2007, 303–304. Cf. already Stechow 1951, 211, and Bloch 1968, 23. Van Leeuwen gives almost a page to Sweerts' portrait, but makes no reference to Raupp; the fact that Raupp mentions the Young Man (although very briefly, in only two lines) among melancholic figures seems to have remained unknown to him.

[10] Klibansky, Panofsky, Saxl 2019 (first edited in 1979 and still a major reference work for anyone writing on the concept of melancholy in art), 376–399.

[11] Sokolova 1988, 114.

[12] See below, n. 16, on the *Double Portrait* by Giorgione.

ly serve as a reminder of the futility of all things, especially since these books are not old, the purse is not empty, and the ink is not meant for writing poems, but bills.

Dürer's Melancholy has a somber darkened face — *facies nigra*, a symptom, caused by an overabundance of black bile.[13] All the characters on the paintings cited by Van Leeuwen are marked by an extremely sad, or somber expression; on some faces, almost desperation is written. The Dürer-inspired melancholics are hopelessly negative about life. Nothing of the sort can be asserted of Sweerts' Young Man, no matter how pensive he looks. He rather resembles Michelangelo's character. Although his face is shadowed, Lorenzo is calm in his reverie. Note that Lorenzo de' Medici, he too, was a banker. He is holding a purse and leaning on a money box. The last detail in Sweerts' image might be read as direct quotation. From the archetypal melancholic we would expect a negative attitude to wealth. Money in this paradigm should be considered an instrument of evil, prosperity — a phantom happiness. It is well known that Lorenzo treated the money differently. Having spent colossal money on construction, patronage and charity he, by his own testimony, was "well pleased", because this expenditure "brought great honor to the state".[14] If Sweerts' banker were a melancholic (and his purse a symbol of temperance, as Van Leeuwen assumes[15]), we would read in his gaze frustration and discontent, necessary attributes of "*melancholische geestesgesteldheid*". But he is evidently little embarrassed by the repressive power of the laws of property. The Young Man's face is not obscured; instead, light falls on it.

We realize, of course, that to reinterpret the painting on the basis of purely aesthetic observations is hardly possible, no matter how convincing the parallels may seem.[16] The clue is in the inscription, and it is not by chance that Sweerts put the Latin motto in such a prominent place. This is, however, where our real difficulties begin. The analysis is hampered by the lack of comparative data. The research area to which this piece is intended to contribute, i. e. the pinacogram studies, does not yet, in fact, exist. There are very few generalizing works,[17] no specialized catalogs, databases etc., while the material itself is vast: only on the Hermitage paintings of the 15th–18th centuries there are several dozens of inscriptions, many of them very peculiar. Considered on its own, the inscription can

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[13] Raupp 1984, 229: „*der durch Überschuss an schwarzer Galle unter den Körpersänften erzeugte dunkle Teint*".

[14] Brucker 1971, 27.

[15] Van Leuven 2007, 303: "*Ook de geldbuidel heeft hier vermoedelijk dezelfde betekenis als de beurs op Dürers prent en moet gezien worden als symbool van matigheid en loon.*"

[16] To Martin (1907, 146) for instance, the Young Man most resembles Paul Potter by Van Der Helst, although the mise-en-scene is quite different and apart from the artist's characteristic attire (even this not very similar), there seems to be little resemblance between two sitters. Cf. Bloch 1968, 23: "*Il est étrange que l'on ait parlé ici de l'influence de B. van der Helst sur Sweerts. Une telle méprise ne peut s'expliquer que lorsqu'on n'a pas vu le tableau original. Le portrait de Leningrad sort complètement du cadre de la peinture de portrait telle que la conçoit l'époque et rien ne nous paraît pouvoir lui être comparé. Samuel van Hoogstraten et Barent Fabritius ont fixé parfois dans leurs portraits un état d'âme assez semblable, bien entendu en se servant du clair-obscur de Rembrandt. La subtilité psychologique du personnage l'apparente aux hommes qui parfois servaient de modèles à Lorenzo Lotto.*" But Lotto's enigmatic models are actually hardly a good association either. One should rather recall, together with Eduard Trautscholdt (1938, 349), the *Double Portrait* from the Palazzo Venezia in Rome, once attributed to Torbido, but now recognized as the work of Giorgione: the sitter props his head in the same way, although this Romeo holding an apple in his left hand is clearly preoccupied with other thoughts than the character of the Flemish master.

[17] The Greek inscriptions on the Renaissance paintings are summarized in: Wilson 1992 and Pontani 1996. In both studies a number of texts are not included or are discussed very briefly. The Latin inscriptions on Vanitas works are comprehensively studied in: Lazer-Pankiv *et al.* 2021 referred to below.

support both said interpretations. That one must pay one's debts — and this is what at first glance *ratio reddenda* seems to verbalize — may be a reason for reflection for the bankrupt waster as well as for the melancholic contemplator of capitalist society.

Let us, then, focus on trifles, guided by the rule *le bon Dieu est dans le détail*, and in the hope that these details will illustrate more general and subtle issues. First of all, the Latin phrase seems to be misspelled. Scholars usually ignore this little weirdness,[18] probably considering it unimportant. The correct spelling should be *ratio cuique reddenda* with dative of the agent denoting "the person on whom the necessity rests" (Allen — Greenough). Sweerts spells the pronoun as *quique*. The nominative plural of *quisque* is extremely rare and not entirely clear in its usage.[19] It is hard to imagine the artist applying it deliberately in any way. *Cuique* and *quique* are phonetically very similar, and several cases of phonetic spelling are registered in the *vanitas* pinacograms. However, such cases are comparatively rare. A team of scholars who studied inscriptions on 139 paintings in the *vanitas* genre registered fairly many allographs like *eternitas,* or *michi* (contrary to the authors, such spelling variants cannot be considered "Latin-writing mistakes", as they are common in manuscripts and early printed editions) along with minor deviations in spelling like *lin**i**a*, but just one grammatical error, originating, in all probability, from the perception of the word by ear.[20] Amusingly, it is made in the tagline of the entire genre: *vanitas vanitat**e**m et omnia vanitas.* The artist, who is supposed to have first made this unfortunate typo (doubt remains if an *Allegory of Vanity*, sold at Dorotheum in 2017, is rightly attributed to Joos van Winghe) was perhaps not very knowledgeable in Latin. David Vickboons and Giuseppe Maria Mitelli, who reiterated it, talented artisans as they were, could hardly tell between Latin accusative and genitive. Sweerts, of an aristocratic family and son of a wealthy father, was most likely well educated. He lived in Rome for several years socializing with the nobility and the princes of the Church. He was a fanatical Catholic, and, as contemporaries testify, a polyglot who knew seven languages.[21] His knowledge of at least elementary Latin is suggested by the fact that he inscribed in that language his album containing a series of 13 highly masterful portrait engravings issued in Brussels in the same year 1656:

> *DIVERSÆ FACIES IN USUM IUVENUM ET ALIORUM DELINEATÆ PER MICHAE*Lem [sic!] *SWEERTS EQUIT. PICT. ETC.*
>
> "Various faces for the use of young men and others drawn by Michael Sweerts, esq. art[ist]. and so on."

It is not just error-free writing — the painter takes into account and even emphasizes his knowledge of the subtleties of Latin spelling. Biblical names, as well as other non-Latin names are not declined in classical Latin. For post-classical authors this creates a certain syntactic difficulty given how often these names have to be embedded in the text. A *va-*

[18] The only one to have marked it is Wolfgang Stechow (1951, 210): "On the piece of paper which is fastened to the cover in front, one reads above: *A. D. 1656. Ratio Quique [sic] Reddenda*, and below to the left *Michael Sweerts Fc.*" The *Fc.* (copied from Martin 1907, 138; the same by Bloch 1968, 91, n. 19) is erroneous; in fact, there is only an *F.* in there (see Fig. 3).

[19] See e. g. Bortolussi 2012, 10, n. 4.

[20] Lazer-Pankiv *et al*. 2021, 240. Sweerts readily allows for such spelling variations: cf. *Rom**e*** (*The Draughts Players*, see n. 25) and *divers**ae***; *delineat**ae*** in the title to his 1656 album of engravings cited just below.

[21] Verwoerd 1937, 166.

nitas-painter wrote: *peccatum <…> Adami et Eva.*[22] By inscribing *-Lem* over *MICHAE-* Sweerts demonstrates that he is aware of this difficulty. Further, by abbreviating *EQUIT.* he makes it clear that he is also aware of the transformation of *eque(s)* into *equi(t)-* in the indirect cases. Sweerts seems to be bragging about his Latin, as well as about his noble birth (keeping with the rules, we should call him "*De* Sweerts"). This is very much in line with his evident narcissism: self-obsession must have been as intrinsic to his complex nature as self-abuse. Let it be noted, in passing, that in 1656 Sweerts, a top Flemish painter and a teacher of masters, indeed perceived himself also in other life capacities — this is indicated by the half-ironic *ETC. Quique* for *cuique* — whether erroneous or allographic — is occasionally found in printed books,[23] on stones and coins.[24] The spelling might have been affected by phonetic similarity to Italian or graphic confusion with French (this possibility will be discussed in more detail later), but considering the above, we can be almost certain that Sweerts writes this way deliberately, thinking perhaps that it is more suited to some higher idea the sentence is meant to express.

The second small and hitherto unnoticed oddity might be related to the first one: all three words of the inscription are capitalized. It is quite clear why Sweerts abbreviated *fecit* or *faciebat* with a capital *F*, thus elegantly avoiding the controversy as to whether the *verbum faciendi* should be rendered in the perfect or in the imperfect tense.[25] *F* written in *capitalis quadrata* imitates the style of ancient inscriptions, abounding with abbreviations. The schoolroom catholic maxim: "Everyone must give an account", should be spelled simply as "*Ratio cuique reddenda*", there is no need to begin *cuique* and *reddenda* with an uncial. The artist may have thought it was prettier that way. But *Ratio Quique Reddenda* is written in italics, and in a deliberately casual style, as if in the handwriting typical for a business paper or letter. The piece of paper is drawn very diligently. We see that it was once folded fourfold lengthwise and bent at the top by about one-fifth of the sheet. Letters are rarely folded in that way,[26] but a bill of exchange or a receipt may very well be. The folded paper which the banker clutches in his hand seems identical to the one unfolded and pinned to the tablecloth. This implies a certain symmetry, two parallel plans — real and allegorical. The paper in the Young Man's hand is, one would think, a promissory note, common in banking. On the same paper addressed to the viewer a rule is written clearly referring to New Testament wisdom teaching.

In its proper meaning *rationem reddere* denotes the provision of financial reports, ledgers, etc. to the interested party (*OLD*, *ratio* 2). In a more general sense, it then implies giving an account of any actions, their explanation, indication of reasons. Although Sweerts lives in a *rationalist* age, the popular philosophical interpretation of the idiom in the sense of reasoned explanation must be dismissed a priori. Given the plot of the paint-

[22] Lazer-Pankiv *et al.* 2021, 240.

[23] See esp. Felisius 1604, 493: *non abnuit quique reddere quod suum est*. The *Catholica praeceptorum Decalogi elucidatio* by Dutch theologist Mathijs Cornelisz Cats (Matthias Felisius) of the Franciscan order, has survived three editions and may have been read by Sweerts.

[24] See *Anglesey* 1960, cccxxxiii; Madai 1767, 417 (Nr 4348).

[25] On this controversy see Matthew 1998, 638–640. The question is essential to mature Renaissance Italian artists. Sweerts, however, seems to have favored the perfect. The *Draughts Players* are supplied with an inscription on a torn envelope lying on the floor: "*Michael Sweerts fecit anno 1652 Rome* [= *Romae*]."

[26] Common are letters folded in triplicate (i. e. two times vertically) and bent by about a third. For a very illustrative account of how letters have been or can be folded see Dambrogio *et al.* 2021, and detailed information under: www.letterlocking.org.

ing, we should concentrate on the original material and derivative allegorical meaning. Callistratus, a Roman jurist of the Late Empire cited in the *Digests*, specifies *redditio rationum* as the procedure of providing a manager's report on the management of the entrusted estate at its inheritance (*Dig.* 35. 1. 82).[27] Hence the celebrated *redde rationem vilicationis tuae* in the Vulgate, *Lk.* 16: 2 (cf.Cato, Agr. 2.2). A manager who has been denounced for embezzlement (maybe falsely, since *diffamatus* means "slandered", Gr. διεβλήθη) must give his master an account of his management, after which he will be deprived of that management. The parable is actually about debts: the steward cuts a part of the debts of his master's debtors, and the master praises him for his prudent behavior.[28] Giving an account of entrusted property or money, i. e. repaying a debt, is one of the core metaphors in the Gospel parables;[29] it might well have been employed by the historical Christ.[30] The servant who performs his task faithfully will be rewarded; the one who becomes drunk and beats the other servants will be taken by surprise by his master and punished harshly for mismanagement: *Lk.* 12: 42–48; *Matth.* 24: 45–51. Obviously, this is about being prepared, but Luke concludes with a striking judgment referring to certain *ratio*, or proportion: "from everyone to whom much is given, much will be required, and to whom much is entrusted, more will be exacted". In the Parable of the Unforgiving Slave (*Matth.* 18: 21–35) the proportion is applied in a different way. The king wants to "reckon (*rationem ponere*) with his slaves" and when he finds out that one of them cannot pay his debt of ten thousand talents, he first orders to sell the slave's property, wife and children, but in response to the debtor's pleas relents and forgives the debt. Meanwhile, this slave does not forgive his debtor of a hundred denarii. When the king is informed of this, he punishes the slave severely. The Parable of the Talents (*Matth*. 25: 14–30) is most instructive for us since it refers to bank interest and usury. The first and the second servants have put their five and two talents to work, and doubled it. They were rewarded by the master when he returned and "reckoned with them" (*posuit rationem cum eis*). The third servant who had buried his talent, was punished, and the money passed to him who had increased his five talents to ten. The narration by Luke (19: 11–27) is complicated by a parallel motive: some people do not recognize the returning master as king. The slaves receive one mine each, but return the first ten mines, the second five. These are given the rule of resp. ten and five cities. The third is dealt with, as by Mathew, and the final judgement is also the same: to him who has much, shall be added, and from him who has nothing, even this shall be taken away. The king's enemies should be brought before him and slaughtered.

Let us now take a moment away from the contexts of *rationem reddere* / *ponere* and look again at our portrait, or rather at the money as it is laid out on the green cloth of the table. We see a stack of gold coins, then several pieces are laid in three rows. Coins are accurately painted out, so a viewer can easily count them: two in the far row half-hidden by an inkwell, five in the second row and three in the third. Then one single coin is laid out

[27] The locus is commented on by Jouanique 1961, 228–229.

[28] For an interpretation of this perplexing story see e. g. Parrot 1991, with an extensive review of the opinions, and a debatable conclusion that the theme of the parable is repentance. Even if this is right, Sweerts could hardly read it that way. The more recent debate and a conception of "eschatological self-interest" can be found in: Giambrone 2017, 252–265.

[29] The topic is treated in a number of works by reputable NT scholars: Giambrone 2017; Piettre, Vouga 2015; Fiensy 2014; Eubank 2013 *et al*.

[30] The debt-stories obviously relate to the Jesus' model prayer: Fiensy 2014, 59. The metaphor is widely present also in Tannaitic literature: Eubank 2013, 44.

Fig. 6. Jan Sanders van Hemessen, The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (https://umma.umich.edu/objects/the-parable-of-the-unmerciful-servant-1959-1-108/ (accessed: 20.12.2023))

separately. In a similar manner, the money is laid out on a well-known canvas by highly influential Jan Sanders van Hemessen commonly thought to represent the Parable of the Unforgiving Slave, but which might as well illustrate the Parable of the Talents (ca 1556, University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, Fig. 6).[31] The motif is therefore not exclusively Dutch (cf. the inscribed engraving illustrating the Parable of the Talents by Lucas van Doetechum, of the close date), but also Flemish, and though already Massys contrasted the counting of money with a Biblical morality (Moneychanger's wife reads a book with an image of Our Lady) and Reymerswaele depicted the biblical tax collector in *The Calling of St Matthew* (ca 1530, here also are account books, a cashbox, debt receipts pinned to the wall and an indication of the relevant NT-verses on a framed paper), it is by Sweerts' compatriot painter that the theme of debts and banking is first treated in connection with Gospel parables dealing with *redditio rationum*, and treated in such a way that it may be regarded as one of most obvious image sources for our portrait.

What the parables transparently hint at, in the Epistles is said explicitly. Pagans who maltreat Christians for putting off the former way of life, "will have to give account (*reddent rationem*) to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 *Petr.* 4:5). The newly converted should obey the leaders of their community in all things, since they "keep watch over you as those who must give an account" for their souls (*quasi rationem pro*

[31] Another *Parable of the Unmerciful Slave* ascribed to him (now in a private collection) represents the begging servant with his wife and child in the foreground, while in the background we see him beating his own debtor. On the Ann Arbor painting the slave does something that he is not supposed to do according to the Biblical story — he counts out coins to the king (who did not call him to demand money, but to punish him). The other two characters on this picture resemble very much two "profitable" slaves. They look like twins, and on the Van Doetechum's engraving the clever servants are also quite similar to each other. It may very well be that the background depicts not an unmerciful slave being dragged to a debt pit, but the unprofitable slave "cast into outer darkness". On the other hand, it is not clear why the slave who lays out a gold piece to the king, if it is a foolish slave, has more coins clutched in his hand. We are most likely dealing with the contamination of two plots.

animabus vestris reddituri, *Heb.* 13:17). The latter idea is particularly emphasized by St Benedict of Nursia in his *Statutes*. The abbot has been entrusted with the management of a very valuable "property":

> Semper cogitet quia animas suscepit regendas, de quibus et rationem redditurus est, sciatque quia qui suscipit animas regendas paret se ad rationem reddenda. Et quantum sub cura sua fratrum se habere scierit numerum, agnoscat pro certo quia in die iudicii ipsarum omnium animarum est redditurus Domino rationem. (Cap. 2.)
>
> Let him always think of the souls that he has received into his stewardship, of which he is to give account, and let him know that he who has received into his stewardship souls must prepare himself to give account. And let him not doubt that as many brethren as he knows are entrusted to his care, for the souls of all of them he will have to give an account to the Lord.

There is no need for us to quote other authors, since the basic meaning of the idiom as well as its allegoric usage is already clear. For any even marginally educated European of Sweerts' era, and of course for himself, a person obsessed with religious thoughts, *ratio reddenda* refers primarily to reporting to God and repaying debts to Him. It immediately evokes in mind the Gospel stories. The creator of the work under study might have been guided by various influences. It is true that as portrait painter Sweerts had the virtue of "keeping the background unadorned and letting the face tell the story",[32] but here the scene is rich in eloquent detail. Before the painter's gaze were Michelangelo's Lorenzo, the Bankers by Gossaert and Van Heemskerck, the Van Hemessen's Evil Slave, as well as other merchants, moneychangers and tax collectors, melancholic figures *et sim*. However, the originality of the Hermitage portrait is defined by the allusion to a heavenly plan: the earthly banker holds in his hand a promissory note, while God has his own bill, the reminder of which is exhibited before us. As Malcolm Waddingham aptly notes, "Sweerts's choice of subjects for portraiture was more catholic than is usually thought".[33] Banking is done on earth, money is lent and paid back with interest. But things are very similar in heaven: to him who has much shall be added, and from him who has not shall be taken away, "money to money".

For this parallelism there is a graphic and textual source that may have influenced Sweerts more than any other. A Flemish Jesuit priest Jan David, the principal of the Jesuit residence in Brussels, Rector of the Jesuit College at Ghent and a well-known catechetical writer of his time, published in 1601 in Antwerp at Officina Plantiniana, the publishing house of Jan Moretus, a collection of emblems under the title *Veridicus Christianus*. The text was in Latin, the Dutch version *Christeliicken waerseggher* appeared in 1603. Emblematic literature was extraordinary popular with the Baroque public, and the Plantin

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[32] Waddingham 1980, 66.

[33] Cf. Waddingham's interpretation of the *Penitent Reading in a Room* (New York, collection of Marco Grassi, of unknown date), ib. 64–65: "Absorbed in a sacred book and seated amid symbols of mortality, the reader is unobtrusively elegant: those more prosperous than mendicants may also suffer from brevity of life. The message that faith can reach us all is well conveyed pictorially, for the scene is not in a monastic cell but the corner of a dark room which opens onto a second one with a table and a picture on the wall. <…> *The Penitent* expresses very intensely Sweerts's fanatical absorption in his faith. Reading the painting in this light, it is easier to understand his decision just over a decade later to join the bishop of Heliopolis, Francis Pallu, on one of his missionary enterprises as a lay brother to Siam." It is also worth noting that all the artworks implying reflections on near or imminent death are, in fact, rhetorically close, attuned to contact with the viewer. Cf., for instance, *Et in Arcadia Ego* paintings by Guercino, Poussin *et cett*.

house once known for editions of this kind has not published anything similar for a long time.[34] The book must have been noted by many. Distinguished by the clarity both in its textual and visual plans and with its high price, it was in demand among the Flemish trade aristocracy. It contains 100 chapters, illustrated with engravings by Theodor Galle. Each etching presents a standard *emblema triplex* — a title (*inscriptio*), a picture (*imago*) and a verse signature (*subscriptio*).[35] The chapters are structured catechistically, the theme is set by a couplet with a question-and-answer structure, the main text is a discourse that explains and justifies the answer.

Ch. 93 (p. 318) is entitled *Durius unde Deus repetet cum foenere sortem? / Abs illo, cui sunt concredita plura talenta* ("From whom will the Lord demand the debt with interest more strictly? From the one to whom more talents have been entrusted"). The heading of the corresponding emblem (Fig. 7) contains the admonition: *quo plus acceperis, hoc maior reddenda ratio* ("the more you take, the greater the amount to be returned"). The quoted hexameters are inscribed below the image in Latin, Dutch and French. The image labeled with letters referring to explanations in the text, so that we cannot be mistaken as to what is depicted, represents the earthly and the heavenly judgments working in parallel. Before the earthly king is a large table with coins laid out on it (ten on his left and eleven on his right), lists of debtors, receipts, sandglass and writing utensils. On either side of the king are people awaiting settlement of their debts, stewards counting gold and taking notes in ledgers. In the foreground on the right an attorney delivers a speech. Before the table a kneeling man folds his palms in a prayerful gesture. This is the Unforgiving Slave. Above, separated by clouds, is the heavenly court perfectly symmetrical to the earthly one. The Lord, represented in the same exact manner as the king, sitting in the tabernacle, wearing a crown and holding a scepter in his right hand, deals with the soul kneeling before Him. On the left is an angel, in his hands a small book, which lists the lifetime merits of the "defendant". On the right is a demon holding a large volume with a list of his "debts". The three-page commentary includes numerous references to Gospel parables. It seems that Jan David's engraving, like Van Hemessen's painting, combines several motifs, with allusions *inter alia* to the Parable of the Talents and the Unjust Steward. The motto of the chapter is inscribed on a ribbon over the image of the Lord: *redde rationem*. The idiom in different grammatical forms is repeated many times throughout the discourse, though never in gerundive with dative of the agent: *cuique* is something Sweerts had to invent. The deviant *quique* could have been caused by the French verses that might have made the strongest impression on him: *Qui est plus contable / A ce redoutable / Bureau qu'attendons? / Celui-la sans doute, / Qui fait banqueroute* (and that's where the 'bankrupt' legend might have emerged prompted by Sweerts' own pious speculations!) / *De ces plus grands dons.* Still, it should be emphasized that we are not dealing with some stone carver or typesetter, whose inaccuracies cannot be counted, but with a very pedantic and very knowledgeable individual who thought over every detail and had a full opportunity to choose whatever he saw fit. There may have been a more compelling internal reason to retain the exotic spelling.

Compared with artists of his time, to whom he is not inferior in talent, Sweerts remains poorly studied in regards to his life circumstances.[36] But one thing we know very

[34] For the origin and the nature of Jan David' s book see: Waterschoot 2007.

[35] Examples can be found in: Zelenin 2017 [Поэтика книжной эмблемы].

[36] Although his work is pretty well researched, see n. 5. The insufficient study is determined primarily by the lack of documentary evidence and leaves room for romantic stories based on the visual interpretation

Fig. 7. Jan David, Veridicus Christianus. Antwerp, Plantin, 1601, 319, embl. 93

well. During the few years that passed since he settled in Brussels, he became more and more immersed in religion, and finally, on a ship built in Amsterdam with his financial participation he left on a Catholic mission to the East. A witness from the *Missions Étrangères* reported that he had sold all his possessions.[37] In 1664, after only eight years since the creation of the *Ratio Reddenda* portrait and the ambitious *Self-portrait as an Art-*

of Sweert's paintings: the most discussed is his homosexuality, and indeed, he almost never depicts lovely women, but in mass and very lovingly — men, often naked. As a portraitist he gives reason to judge his works as "intended to surprise and puzzle" (Waddingham 1986, 95), "*geheimnisvoll*", even "*seltsam*" (Röske 11, n. 2; cf. Bloch 1965, 166, 169), pregnant with hidden senses.

[37] See Kultzen 1996, 8.

ist he died at the Portuguese mission in Goa mentally unstable and hardly bearable even to his Jesuit brothers. He embodied his credo in the mysterious *Double Portrait* (Paul Getty Museum) presumably made in Syria, in 1662. An inscription on a sheet of paper that one of the sitters holds reads: *Signor mio, vedete la strada di salute per la mano di Sweerts*. Here too the sphragis is related to the artist's message and is intentionally ambiguous, meaning that "the hand of Sweerts" non just made that painting but points at "the road to salvation". The bearded man who shows the way should thus be identified as the artist himself, justifying his life choices, while the person in the luxurious red garb and with turbaned head represents the average mortal, the viewer for whom the lesson is intended.

We have noticed that Sweerts did not write the Gospel motto in the middle of the sheet, as if a moral central to the plot, but at the top, perhaps imitating, in this too, Jan David's emblem. *Ratio Quique Reddenda* points at a second, heavenly plan. This heavenly receipt, a business message from on high, spelled in some unusual manner and entitled with words beginning each with a capital letter, is filled with a higher metaphorical meaning. *Ratio* is an account of property entrusted to us, i. e. our soul and earthly life. *Reddenda* speaks of the need to give an account of it in due time. And our names should be inscribed under *Quique*. Knowing of Sweerts' life attitude, his immersion in mystical contemplation and thoughts of repentance we might even suppose that *Quique* appealed to him also for its grammatical ambiguity, as if implying that all of us, human beings, have to give an account of our debts to the Lord. This possibility cannot be neglected, given how much in this painting is autobiographical: it is not just an artwork, but a life testimony, a turning point at which the artist's inclination towards religion possibly began.

He lived in the countries whose people participated massively in market speculation, took risks, profited and lost, and had to pay back debts. Even Rembrandt could not escape the speculative fever of his time, systematically buying up all the prints of his engravings in order to increase their prices.[38] The enterprising merchant becomes the dominant type. Presumably, Sweerts did not escape this general trend either. Now, what makes the Portrait of a Young Man even more distinctive, setting it apart from Michelangelo's Lorenzo, the bankers' or merchants' images by Gossaert, Van Heemskerck and Holbein, is its attachment to the plot, kind of narrative implied in it. Those are static, found and shown in their life position amidst the trappings of their profession, while Sweerts' hero has just stopped his work and is either about to continue or pondering whether it is worth continuing at all. This may be due to the features of genre painting inherent in the portrait, but also to its internal affinity with illustrations of Gospel parables by Van Hemessen, Van Doetechum and their likes. Anyway, this work, even more than Sweerts' other portraits, is characterized by "a sharp awareness of the uniqueness of an instant and a realization of being finally alone with oneself".[39]

A handsome young businessman is engrossed in counting. He makes entries in his bank books, checks the amounts against the receipts, stacks the gold pieces in rows, one by one. Another coin is laid out to start a new row, another receipt ready for checking. Then he stops, struck by a sudden thought. He thinks that his bank calculations are quite identical with what happens to a man in his fatal hour. Not only this debit-credit mechanism is inescapable here on earth, and this is how the universe works — the same law works in heaven too. He is not reflexive about whether usury is a sin, his thinking goes in the different direction and further afield. Woe to him who finds himself unable to settle his major

[38] Lazarev 1933 [Ян Вермеер Дельфтский, 1632–1675], 9.
[39] Waddingham 1976, 65.

debt, *qui fait banqueroute des ses plus grands dons* — nothing is worse than bankruptcy of this kind! He recalls the debt parables of the Gospels: they are all about the same thing, only they comment on it from different viewpoints. And so, the young man looks straight into the eyes of the viewer, his gaze expressing calm acceptance, and maybe even curiosity: does the spectator realize that this is the way things are, and that he too will have to put his name on the list? He keeps looking gravely and questioningly and under that long look everyone begins to feel the piercing contrast between blooming, sensitive youth and this stern and fearful wisdom: *Ratio Quique Reddenda*.

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Ratio Quique Reddenda — что подразумевал Свертс?*

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«Портрет молодого человека», или «Автопортрет», кисти Михаэля Свертса (ГЭ 3654) мало изучен, хотя интерес искусствоведов должно было вызвать уже то обстоя-

* Настоящее исследование выполнено в рамках проекта РНФ № 23-28-00142 «Латинские и греческие надписи на картинах Эрмитажа». Авторы выражают искреннюю благодарность Д. М. Бумажнову за библиографические советы по изучению Нового Завета, а также участникам Международной филологической конференции (IPHC, СПбГУ, март 2024 г.) и Althistorisches Kolloquium FS. 2024 (Digitale Vorlesungsreihe: Санкт-Петербург — Берн, Altertumswissenschaftliche Kooperation im Virtelllen Raum, Bibliotheca classica Petropolitana & Universität Bern), особенно Н. А. Алмазовой, Д. В. Кейеру и — не в последнюю очередь — А. К. Гаврилову за ценнейшую критику.

тельство, что эрмитажный портрет — одна из двух известных на сегодня работ мастера, датированная им самим, причем датированная 1656 годом, поворотным в его биографии. Кроме даты, на листке, приколотом к зеленому сукну скатерти, читаются сфрагида: Michael Sweerts F[ecit], и морализирующий девиз: Ratio Quique [sic!] Reddenda. Скатерть покрывает стол, за которым, опершись щекой на руку, сидит юноша. Согласно ранней, явно ошибочной, интерпретации, на полотне изображен банкрот. Именно под таким названием картина фигурировала в коллекции И. И. Шувалова и с ним перекочевала сперва в Академию художеств, затем в Эрмитаж. Высказанное искусствоведами Эрмитажа толкование картины как принадлежащей к жанру vanitas также уводит в сторону. В действительности перед нами не промотавшийся кутила и не аллегория бренности мира, а напротив — расчетливый и деятельный бизнесмен, точнее банкир, окруженный принадлежностями своего ремесла. Что юноша по роду деятельности связан с финансами, доказывают выразительные параллели — портреты фламандских и голландских менял, купцов, откупщиков и сборщиков податей XVI–XVII вв. В современном прочтении этот юноша — «меланхолик». Поза центрального персонажа «Меланхолии I», равно как и других меланхолических типажей Дюрера и его многочисленных последователей, тождественна его позе. Лицо его не имеет, однако, ничего общего с их facies nigrae, как, впрочем, и со строгими лицами банкиров и купцов Госсарта, ван Хемскерка и др. Своеобразным портрет Свертса делает также своего рода повествовательность, внимание к моменту, существенное для трактовки замысла, ключом к которому служит латинская пинакограмма. Последняя в свою очередь имеет ряд особенностей: она помещена вверху под датой, как бы заглавием ненаписанного списка; каждое слово начато с заглавной буквы; экзотическая орфография (quique = cuique), видимо, также обдумана. Свертс охотно использовал латинский в подписях, демонстрируя свою образованность. У его современников, даже мало образованных, выражение rationem reddere в первую очередь вызывало ассоциации с евангельскими притчами о долгах. Фламандские живописцы обратились к этим сюжетам за столетие до Свертса. Полотно ван Хемессена на тему притчи о немилосердном должнике воспринимается как один из источников анализируемого портрета. Персонаж Свертса сжимает в руке сложенную долговую расписку, в то время как о другом долге, который также требуется уплатить, и уплатить с процентами, напоминает бумага, развернутая и обращенная к зрителю. Параллелизм земной и небесной реальностей подчеркнут на гравюре Теодора Галле, иллюстрирующей гл. 93 комментированного сборника эмблем за авторством фламандского иезуита Яна Давида «Veridicus Christianus» (1601). Книга заслужила популярность у читателей XVII в. и, по всей вероятности, была известна Свертсу. Гравюра и портрет имеют ряд общих деталей, надпись на гравюре гласит: redde rationem, а поясняющий эмблему текст пестрит отсылками к притчам. Свертс изобразил молодого банкира в момент, когда тот отвлекся от своих подсчетов и задумался о том, что один и тот же закон, заставляющий сводить дебет и кредит, действует в дольнем и в горнем мире и что в списке должников значится имя каждого из нас. Этой мыслью, крайне волновавшей самого художника, а также, весьма вероятно, воспоминанием о тексте французских стихов на тему ratio reddenda из альбома Я. Давида, спровоцированы формальные особенности латинской надписи, центральной в композиции картины.

Ключевые слова: Свертс, «Портрет молодого человека», латинские пинакограммы.

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