

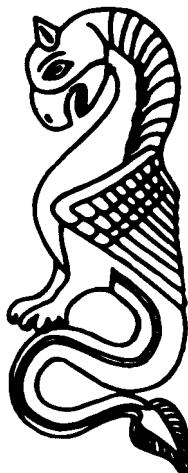
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Cornelis van Ghiste's Defence of Rhetoric

Elsa Strietman

In a monumental study¹ about the rhetorician and humanist Cornelis van Ghiste, Mireille Vinck-van Caekenberghe concluded that Van Ghiste was neither a great poet nor a great translator. However, his translations of the Ancients into the vernacular and his extensive use of classical material in his own Dutch and Latin writings, made him an extremely important figure in the context of Rhetoricians' culture as well as in the budding Renaissance culture of the Low Countries in the later sixteenth century.

Vinck-van Caekenberghe's work elicited admiration but also received some substantial criticism from reviewers, criticism that was understandable since in the thirteen years between the completion of the research and the date of publication Rhetoricians' studies had moved on. The main objections were that the evaluation of Van Ghiste's work remained somewhat hampered by Vinck-van Caekenberghe's ahistorical approach and that her ultimate conclusion did not do justice to either the humanist/Rhetorician or his work.

Nevertheless, the great merit of this study was founded on precisely the painstaking detail with which the author showed both the wider context of sixteenth-century Rhetoricians' culture and that of the early Renaissance and the multifarious ways in which Van Ghiste participated in both. He was a highly significant figure whose work shows the expansion of a Rhetoricians' culture which gradually allowed the infiltration of the classics and fused its own traditions with the new literary culture. We should adjust Vinck-van Caekenberghe's image of Van Ghiste as a somewhat clumsy forerunner to the great and canonized literary lions of the Dutch Golden Age to that of a positive creator in his own time and his own right. This does not deny the merits of Vinck-van Caekenberghe's work, whilst allowing Van Ghiste his place under the stars.

Van Ghiste was the literary leader, *factor*, of the Antwerp Chamber of Rhetic De Goublome (The Marigold) and must have written many plays in his period of office (1550?-1570?). None of these plays has survived except a few

contributions to the, by now famed, Rhetoricians' competition (*Lantjuweel*) in Antwerp in 1561. These consist of a *Presentacie*, introducing the proposed contribution of *The Marigolds* to the competition, a *Prologhe* and the *spel van sinne* (a morality) itself, as well as an epilogue. The *Presentacie* expresses joy that peace has chased away discord and sorrow and that it is now possible for the flowers of Rhetoric to lift their heads to the sunshine. The peace referred to is that of Cambrai, 1559, which ended one of the many wars between France and Spain. Many Chambers of Rhetoric had flower names and this enabled the comparison in the *Presentacie*: *De Goublome* and the other Chambers can now, in loving harmony, practise their art. The *Prologhe*, a dialogue between the allegorical character *Antwerpia* and *Honest Art*, a lady, elaborates this theme and outlines the aims of the competition: to cherish and to promote the art of Rhetoric and to further the glory of Antwerp.

The theme of the 1561 competition was the relationship between commerce and art, worded as a question '*Dwelck den mensche aldermeest tot consten verweckt?*' (What inspires mankind most to the arts?) The answers to this question were expected to centre on commerce as a source of inspiration. The organizers had been very concerned indeed to come up with a theme that avoided any religious or political controversy, not surprisingly, since the Low Countries were increasingly troubled by both in this latter part of the sixteenth century.

Van Ghistele's *spel van sinne* concerns itself with the origins of the liberal arts, amongst them, prominently, the art of Rhetoric; the form is that of a discussion between a number of allegorical figures. The central figure is that of *Mankind* who is besieged by the ideas of *Avaricious Heart*, the spirit of all that is mean and grasping, the evil face of capitalism. Fortunately, *Mankind*'s other instructors are of a different ilk; *Reason*, *Honourable Fame* and *Intelligent Spirit* counteract *Avaricious Heart*'s malicious suggestions and demonstrate with a wealth of mythological, historical and biblical detail how the liberal arts developed and how they became the instruments of all that is good in the hands of scholars and philosophers. Trade and commerce, if conducted with integrity and without greed, can only be beneficial to the arts, in particular the art of Rhetoric. Indeed, without the skills of the *artes*, trade and commerce would not flourish.

As is so often the case in Rhetoricians' plays the message is enforced by an extra medium, that of the *toog* or *figuere*, a pictorial aid to understanding, which sometimes can take the form of a *tableau vivant*, sometimes of a text or picture. In the edition² of the plays performed in the competition which the printer Willem Silvius published in 1562 a picture is included of what could have been presented as a *tableau vivant* on the stage, but might also have been a painted pictorial aid.

Certainly, the explanation given, detail by detail, to *Mankind*, tallies with Silvius' representation.

The antecedents of the picture are complex and link this Rhetoricians' play with the popular and immense emblemata production³; the fact that Van Ghiste chose to use it shows his knowledge of the humanist culture of his time and demonstrates also how much, at that time, the vernacular culture of the Rhetoricians was widening out and becoming a Renaissance culture.

Van Ghiste does not omit to include God the Father and the Holy Spirit as ultimate sources of inspiration for the arts but the major part of his text is a roll-call of mythological and classical sages whose part in the promotion of Rhetoric and her sisters seamlessly fits into the frame formed by the Christian history of creation and salvation. Many of the descriptions and legends referred to must have come from encyclopedic writings or from the florilegia used in schools or universities, and here too the emblemata literature makes its presence prominently felt.

In the edition of 1562 the text of the play is accompanied by short glosses, sometimes no more than the name of the philosopher or scholar referred to in the discussion. Some are difficult to decipher and I have had to let some go without explanatory annotation. Though it is a task not undertaken for this contribution, there is much to be discovered and to be discussed with reference to Van Ghiste's material and sources and the annotations in the printed text which were very likely supplied by the author rather than the printer. Vinck-van Caekenberghe discusses in detail Van Ghiste's sources and the poetic theories which he implicitly voiced in these contributions to the competition and she refers to a number of other studies as well.⁴

In this case, however, I have limited myself to giving a translation of Van Ghiste's *Presentacie*, the *Prologhe* and the *spel van sinne*, with a few annotations. There is no modern edition of the Antwerp plays in their entirety and none of the texts has so far appeared in translation.

I offer this translation, with due modesty and acknowledging its defects, to one who has done a very great deal for the noble art of Rhetoric and its modern revival: to Meg Twycross, *A lady dressed in many colours with a pen and a scroll in her hand, seated upon a waggon, next to a pile of masks and pointing to Many Characters. Selete. Here they sing and play.*

De Goubloeme van Antwerpen.



PRESENTACIE

Just as the Marigold always closes
itself in the night with a sad aspect
and is unfolded again by the sunshine,
waking in the blessed dawn,
so also we, growing flowers, likewise,
with all our fellow-brothers unified,
have woken up. For sorrow has vanished
in the light of the peace which shines brightly upon us
and they, for whom the oppressive darkness of discord

caused endless suffering and heavy burdens,10
are now inspired, as is clearly apparent,
to artistic endeavour and the creation of joy
because of the peace which lightens all hearts.

And also (for you, artistic Gillyflowers,⁵ inspire us, you who are
inclined to gentleness in lovely ways15
and to all that a real artist can achieve),
we Marigolds as one man address you
with a loving presentation
so that we can inspire everyone
to increasing virtue, without disturbance,20
and to a loving accord, shunning
all argument which might hinder or prevent;
for virtue nor joy can be maintained,
even if all her laws are just,
if discord sets her face against them.25

And therefore we now unite in harmony
amongst all flowers of Rhetorica
which we now see here gather.
Yes, I hope to be as unfalteringly faithful
as was incomparable Pylades to Orestes,30
and to bring all together in a loving accord;
to make this clear to all
we now show you our honourable Motto
with an honest willing heart,
urged to do this by the active spirit
which inspires an ingenious find,35
so that love will be elevated
now that discord has been banished.

Therefore, noble princes, receive graciously
that which our art offers you;40
even if the art is in itself imperfect.
Only our willing heart,
which directs itself so passionately towards you,
aspire, not to glory (inviting criticism)
which often generates a doubtful rule,45
but because we would show virtuously

according to the meaning of our Motto,
that we, as gentle brothers, in all honour,
would arouse in ourselves the nature of our art,
avoiding all that would hinder, and thus increase
joy, virtue and loving togetherness.

50

PROLOGHE

Characters

Antwerpia

Honourable Art, *a woman*

My soul rejoices thoroughly
because the tempest of bloodthirsty Mars
has now vanished and his standard is broken,
and the banners of peace are now unfurled
which have been hidden for a long time.

5

Now joy is rising everywhere
and all are inclined to the solace of art.

Therefore I, Honourable Art,
am now cherished by all,
especially by incomparable Antwerpia,
which now shows her pleasure like a maiden,
her love for me in a triumphant mode,
and has received all my lovers graciously.

10

Now to her I will wend my way
and honour her with thanks in my heart.

15

I have seen her, so will turn to her
and greet her most joyfully:
May Noah's grace, Abraham's blessedness,
Joseph's prosperity and audaciousness
be bestowed on you always.

20

Oh, unblemished maiden, worthily bepearled
who are a flower in this world
and whose nourishment benefits all.

Antwerpia

Oh Honourable Art, be welcome.
To serve you pleases me greatly
though all that praise makes me ashamed,
for I am not worthy of such accolades.

25

Honourable Art

On the contrary, I would endeavour
to voice even more praise.
Just as we see the moon shine clearly
under all the stars in heaven's firmament
so you shine, oh, maiden excellent,
brighter than any in all of Europe.
Would you not be worthy of praise?
It would be an uncouth character
who would in any way denigrate you.
To me you reveal now instantly
your virtuous intelligent nature,
for to arouse enthusiasm for me,
you desire that all good arts
will be revealed in all their benevolence.

30

35

40

Antwerpia

Reason and nature both advised me:
for those who spurn you, flower most worthy,
are useless parasites here on earth.
The world which was wild and uncouth
and mankind which was very uncivilized,
you have educated so graciously
that the intelligent person who embraced virtue
now acknowledges freely how greatly
you help us and how miserably
you are spurned by the blockheads.

45

50

Honourable Art

Why you, Antwerpia, should amply be lauded,
is that you want to broadcast my name and my fame

so that all should delight in me,
and to cause the coarse of mind,
who are cruel and stern and in everything fierce,
to incline towards me and artistic endeavour.

55

Antwerpia

Yes, you should by all men alive
be honoured, as is befitting.
The coarse of mind scorn your doctrine
which is, however, divinely enriched.
Thus I have desired for the sake of your love
(as you have declared here yourself) to know,
by means of my townsmen, the Gillyflowers,
how best to arouse in the vulgar of mind
a wish to serve you and to cherish
your artistic gifts in every respect;
for you are the flower and you wear the crown,
oh loveliest beauty, curing with joy the sick of heart.

60

65

Honourable Art

I cannot thank you sufficiently
and barely repay you for all you have done:
you have summoned all rhetoricians
here into Brabant, to attend this great feast,
so that all those inclined to the art
can delight in joyous and refined experiences.

70

75

Antwerpia

That's my intention, for those who engage
in you, noble art, mild, pure and modest,
must endeavour, gently and tranquilly,
to profit from a harmonious unity.
Should that fail, then small comfort
or profit will ensue from the art.
Love and unity enable us all
to gain fame full of honour
from serving you, here on earth,

80

since you improve a true and valiant artist.

85

Honourable Art

Where conflict and discord have the upper hand,
there I am rejected and exiled and hurt.

But now we will yield to my true lovers
and let them speak, as they do it so well.

We will be the audience and we'll listen
in what manner they will enhance my fame.
The subject of their speech will be seemly;
All bad behaviour will be nipped in the bud.

90

Antwerpia

For my subjects will now perform
(they are Marigolds growing in virtue)
not for fame but for love, as befits youthful artists,
and show how you are truly worthy of praise!

95

Honourable Art

We hope to have pleased you so far,
noble lords, with this simple admonition,
may you graciously receive it as our Prologue.

100

**TSPEL VAN SINNE OF THE AFOREMENTIONED
MARIGOLDS.**

Characters

Mankind, dressed in an antique mode, with in his hand the litteram Pythagoræ.⁶

Avaricious Heart, dressed in red, with in his hand a rattle.⁷

Intelligent Spirit, a Youth dressed in white, singing.

Honorable Fame, a lady, clad in a golden yellow silk costume, with two wings.

Reason, a lady.

Mankind,

Avaricious Heart, you torment me too much,
where I go or stand, woman or man, your clutch
holds me tight, whether I eat or drink,
you're near, eager and diligent, I think.

Avaricious Heart

That's so you can use his wealth, Mankind, 5
like an honourable lord, in body and mind.

For she is a powerful lady, excellent,
who rules all the world's regiment.

Everything around her is luxurious,
like a Queen's ambiance, 10
well-known amongst the most famous,
an earthly Goddess' radiance,
and you could have her and gain profit,
only through me, and you well know it.

Adhere to her, with your heart and your mind, 15
for wealth is the blood and soul of mankind.

Mankind

But she is fickle and faithless.

Today towards this one she gives her riches,
tomorrow she smiles on the other and helps him.

And that on the whim 20

of Fortuna, whose moods are her laws;
and many she mercilessly draws
away from her in just a moment;
then their lifestyle, so opulent,
such is Fortuna's government, 25
will perish in miserable sadness.

He who was in Croesus' regiment,
she causes to plummet, like Icarus,
it's clear everywhere, into wretchedness.

Even though wealth is a great Princess
and helps many out of danger, yes,
Fortuna rules her as a mistress. 30

Avaricious Heart

I know: don't trust Fortune's machinations
nor build your foundations
on her: she rules over man's passion
in an untrustworthy fashion.

35

But I, Avaricious Heart, will not fail you,
since you will maintain love true
for wealth, and through my inspiration
will last its domination,
until Lybitina's temptation⁸
destroys you. That smile
of Lady Fortuna will bring oppression
in a very short while.
With a friendly mien she will beguile
some, (by no means all mankind)
whom she will later despoil. But I'll,
Avaricious Heart, never leave you behind.

40

45

Mankind

And if in riches I took my delight
and through your crafty cunning might
have them day and night in my possession
causing my destruction,
would virtue (I cannot help but ask you)
allow this and be able to bear it too?
He who is upright in his opinion,
for him wealth holds no attraction
but he feels great condescension,
(which shows that he is wise)
towards all wrongs, whatever their temptation.

50

55

Equally, riches cannot entice
him; in no way does he rise
to their false promises;
fragile, sickly human nature's demise
is caused by this short-lived rubbish.

60

Pausa

<p><i>Intelligent Spirit</i></p> <p>No lovelier solace is given to mankind, in all the wide world, by pure art when shame is driven out and sets the wretched man free. Those who practice art as it should be and use their mind when they do, eternal fame shall their share be and they'll please the virtuous too.</p> <p>That is why I, Intelligent Spirit, do love her with virtuous affection, for she will give honour and merit, and rewards me without exception.</p> <p>Such a reward is a more costly gift than gold or silver however bepearled, for even though mankind is but short-lived such a prize will endure in the world.</p> <p>The title of Princess should be the share of art pure and chaste in her habits; more than riches beloved everywhere her fame is the prize for her merits.</p>	<p><i>Intelligent Spirit appears, singing</i></p> <p>65</p> <p>70</p> <p>75</p> <p>80</p> <p>85</p>
<p><i>Mankind</i></p> <p>Whose voice does sound in my ear so pleasant and sweet to hear that melancholy thought is chased out?</p>	90
<p><i>Avaricious Heart</i></p> <p>Keep away, there's Intelligent Spirit about, he tends to be thoughtless, unfeeling.</p>	90
<p><i>Mankind</i></p> <p>I have received from his singing a heart full of solace and ease; I must engage him in speaking.</p>	90

Avaricious Heart

Your grief will increase

if you deal with him much
but wealth will not cage you as such;
be wise: do not give him credence!

95

Mankind

Surely I can give him audience,
that is my intention, I wish it.
Well, why silent, Intelligent Spirit?
You can be vociferous, I inferred from your singing.

Intelligent Spirit

Those hearts which are frightened need cheering,
but going on for too long is a bore.

100

Mankind

Do tell me what makes your heart sore,
For your spirit plays in joyous fashion.

Intelligent Spirit

It's for her whom I love with a passion,
the most worthy I know in world's place,
for she does possess divine grace
and her being is without comparison;
and she's pure and chaste in addition;
she's worthy of my praise above all,
of my veneration the object principal,
and I loyally laud her with singing.

105

110

Mankind

Who is this whose praise you like spreading
for whom you carry a torch with such flame?
Tell us her name.

Intelligent Spirit

She's called art.

I tell you straight out: she is famous.

115

Avaricious Heart

And often (as can be seen) quite ravenous.
If you love her with such fire, begad,
then you're truly an amorous lad –
but this falls on deaf ears, I surmise.

Intelligent Spirit

Oh Avaricious Heart, you are unwise
to speak of the nature of art so derisory;
it is because you act mostly advisory,
urging people to chase after powerful wealth;
and many a person lost spiritual health,
I tell you no lies, in the most cruel way.

120

125

Avaricious Heart

Nonsense, who's able to hinder or to gainsay
the chap who gains riches on earth?

Intelligent Spirit

*Amphias et Phocylides*⁹

War and Fortuna can certainly mean a dearth
of the power of wealth and make it vanish;
but art you will not be able to banish,
neither war nor Fortuna's army
will diminish her steadfast constancy;
by your side she will remain
and many she's given great gain
who erstwhile sat in a place quite low.
She'll give you the means and she'll show
you the way to honest and virtuous endeavour,
and all who decently use her
she's made brave and always held in esteem.

130

135

Avaricious Heart

True, but also so poor, it would seem,
that they can barely touch with their bread

140

the end of another loaf; instead
in poverty's hamlet they forage.

Intelligent Spirit

Those are the ones who with manners savage
and unwise abuse the art foolishly.

145

If the captain steers his ship stupidly,
is his trouble the fault of the sea?

Art wants to be used with dignity
from folly of mind no delight she derives:
they are not all cooks who carry long knives,

150

that they meddle with art is a shame.

See this valiant figure, 'tis Honourable Fame,
one of art's lovers and respected no end.

Mankind

I think she's got ten on each hand,
but you alone are not in her troupe.

155

Intelligent Spirit

Many love her and she loves the whole group,
noble and ignoble, as is her nature
and all her followers of respectable stature
who favour her in harmony
form a sweet unified company.

160

You, Honourable Fame, of great reputation
will certainly give us your confirmation
that art gives her bounty in ways quite manifold.

HF appears blowing a trumpet

Honourable Fame

No sweeter sound than that which I, Fame, unfold
who announce honest gain in all crannies and nooks;
and as is attested in so many books
honest gain was born in the land of Greece.
So I'll blow my trumpet once more with force
for to my actions many pay heed.

165

Mankind

What sound is that, that tone so sweet?
I don't hear that often, I have to say.

170

Intelligent Spirit

It's Honourable Fame, who is on her way,
and what I said before is still true about art:
Fame showed her always the highest regard.
Without Fame the love of art would loose its worth.
Just as fortune rules wealth on this earth
(wealth which is praised by Avaricious Heart),
so what greatly increases the standing of art
is the power unparalleled, the power of Fame.

175

Avaricious Heart

Do I have to suffer much more of the same
and listen to the drivel that is given voice?

180

Mankind

Avaricious Heart, do hold your noise,
I want to listen to what Fame has to say.

Honourable Fame

All those who live under heaven's choir
can leave nothing behind that's immortal
to their benefit except praise eternal,
which is only achieved with perfection
by Intelligent Spirit who holds in affection,
with all his powers, the noble art
and those who adore her with all their heart.
Without boasting I can praise their worth
and call them blessed even whilst on this earth.
They bestow honour on every country and town,
all immoral behaviour they cause to go down
and within a short span of time they receive
praise which will never decrease but will achieve
that it shines forever as a clear light.

185

190

195

Look, here is Intelligent Spirit, all his might
is bent upon art, with great concentration.

I look forward now to his presentation.

200

But why does Avaricous heart occupy
the place next to him, with unrest as ally,
that enemy of all art, to what end?

Intelligent Spirit

Honourable Fame, you are my friend,
your voice is balm for my spirit,
and honest gain is sweetly nourishing it,
it's a medicine for the soul and won't fail.

205

Honourable Fame

Out of love for you I come with my tale.
But first tell me, answer me freely
why do I see you here in the company
of Avaricious Heart, no friend of ours,
who panders to wealth as a slave at all hours
and denies virtue to himself and mankind.

210

Intelligent Spirit

Fame, fame you are of such powerful mind;
I shall explain the reason and make this clear:
It's art alone that gives me joy and cheer,
and Avaricious Heart can't harm my health
but he would like to lure mankind to wealth;
I hate it as I hate a spider full of poison.

215

Honourable Fame

Blessed are those who use wealth within reason,
for honest benefit, and know its deprivations;
for them art's lustre will know no limitations.
But Avaricious Heart will gain no ground,
for him my trumpet will make no triumphant sound
but only for those, wherever they may dwell,
whom I can enlist to cause art's ranks to swell,

220

225

even if Avaricious Heart goes on mocking
mankind, with restless grief tormenting
and inciting him to all kinds of serious mischief.

She blows again

Mankind

Honourable Fame, your sweet words make me believe
that I can put my trust in you, without hesitation,
but I would like to ask you for information:
what do you call your instrument, that trumpet?

230

Honourable Fame

I call her Honest Gain; that's what you'll get
when, like art's lovers, you like to hear her play.
Avaricious Heart, restlessly, longs to make you sway
and pursue dishonest gain which causes great corruption.
Just like a sick man develops a lasting aversion
to the sweetness of food, and, I'm not unjust,
likewise Avaricious Heart views with great disgust
Honourable Fame whenever she appears
and honest gain sounds discordant in his ears;
it makes him vomit, it's often proven, truly.

235

Mankind
I think I understand your declaration fully;
it makes me desire to practice art unblemished,
through honest gain, for which my heart is famished;
you sang its praises. And you get lost, away from here,
Avaricious Heart, leave me alone, I don't want you near,
your sharp practices I fear; they make me shiver.

245

Avaricious Heart

Well, Honourable Fame, I don't exactly quiver
with excitement at any of your games, they're a bore!
I'll try another place, a more promising shore.
There's little point in staying, no advantage.

250

Honourable Fame

Look, here comes Reason, there's a worthy personage,
he'll help us show that it's just and wise
that everyone should bow to art and realise
that she's greater than wealth, whatever its reputation.

255

Reason appears, clad in blue with a bridle in her hand

Reason

Who could still doubt what is the true situation?
Aided by me, Reason, art will greatly benefit
and you, Honourable Fame, will send her honest profit,
forever in this world and in such a fashion
that wealth (hunted by avaricious people with a passion)
is not heeded for itself; 't will be quite natural
to use it in a manner, entirely beneficial.
For art, a philosopher once said, and wisely,

260

makes mankind great, and gives liberality,
which is why we speak of the liberal arts
which with various gifts enrich people's hearts,
suitable to each; this is, Intelligent Spirit, through you.

265

Intelligent Spirit

Grammar is a sweet kernel from which we do
receive the first inspiration for our art.
Dialectic also plays her well-mannered part
and also Rhetoric, very praise-worthy,
a gift which not only makes us happy
but stirs, teaches, shows what is virtuous.

270

275

Honourable Fame

Astronomy has made many famous
and given them greatness through the ages
And Cosmography describes, in all its stages,
the world with the help of the arts.
Geometry who measures all parts,

280

gives each satisfaction, one mustn't forget.

Reason

And Arithmetic needs to be added to that,
whilst Music must not be left behind:
she plants joy in the heart of mankind
and chases away melancholy with her might.

285

Intelligent Spirit

These are such gifts of which scholars write
(which the ignorant may well despise).
but for art's lovers it is a great prize.
Without the enhancing spirit of art, I can tell,
no realm can be governed at all well
as Fame will explain now in detail.

290

Honourable Fame

Therefore Aristippus¹⁰ considered, without fail,
'twould be better to beg for a living
than to lack art's talents and teaching,
which dignifies not just the individual
but gives to the common weal in general
honourable profit which can't fail to please.

295

Mankind

Your words, Honourable Fame, do increase
my feelings, ever more, ever better,
of the love towards art that I harbour
and which makes me reject with passion
wealth, which is only a temporal possession,
and much inferior to art, as I hear.

300

Reason

They must be foolish or mad, it is clear,
or like creatures without reasonable thinking,
to cast doubts on art's wonderful blessing,
and despise what we all should adore,

305

Intelligent Spirit
which we all need,

Reason

which is worth more
than any other thing under the sun's light.
A wise philosopher¹¹ once did write
that all the gifts that art can bestow
are given by God to us here below;
Art's fame'll never die but with all her might,
will serve her, you see, far and wide,
will encourage her lovers with benefits,
reveal art's gifts and all well-deserved profits
which have ever been given to man.

Philon 310

315

Mankind

Such great gifts! Is't possible that I can
receive those and that her grace so sweet
will also come to me?

Intelligent Spirit

Indeed!

I, Intelligent Spirit, will be helping.

320

Reason

I, Reason, will assuage your great longing;
for without me you would not achieve it.

Honourable Fame

True, it's needful for all to perceive it
for just as God governs the world and mankind
so reason is ruler over man's mind,
a Microcosmos, that is the name:
a small world, which derives its fame
from wise scholars with a great reputation.

325

Intelligent Spirit

The body, I'll give you this explanation,
consists of four different elements,
but the spirit is of divine components;
we humans need Heaven's inspiration
for art.

330

Reason

I can say without hesitation,
and it's written: when the mistress is away
the household is often thrown into disarray
by servants and by conflictuous perturbation.
Just so the senses are often affected by disturbance
when reason is not there to help complete
or start a thing.

Phocylides 335

Honourable Fame

Be clever, try to meet
Reason and dog his footsteps in pursuit;
then you can use pure, honest art for good,
her decent gifts will bring you joyous gain.
But first I must, without causing you pain,
unveil the origins of art with a visual explanation
so that your heart will sense a great elation
and you'll desire to live in virtue and honesty.

340

345

He opens [the curtain]

Mankind

Here is a lovely picture,¹² see,
but what does it mean? I haven't got a clue.

Honourable Fame

Now, Mankind, I'm happy to help you construe
its significance and to help clarify
what art is. Look, seated there on high,
on that vast pillar, that square stone,
that is Mercury, placed as on the throne

350

HONOS ALIT ARTES.



*Ut Sphæra Fortuna, cubo sic insidet Hermes,
Artibus hic varijs, casibus illa praest
Lubrica sed casus fortuna minatur iniquos
Ast certam miseris ars bona praefat opem.*

aedene.

of noble art, written in free expression,
for he first held art's gifts in his possession
and lent them to us, as many witnesses agree.

355

Reason

Look, there is Fortune who must bend her knee,
standing on a round globe, in precarious balance,
and as a counterweight against her force
is Mercury, ready, at all hours; if she should fall,
brought down by her unstable poise upon that ball,
she'll try and get his help: he's constant,
for the nature of art is valiant and reliant,
while Fortune's promises are 'easy come and easy go',
whom she favours today, tomorrow tumbles low;
she holds out greatness as often as she makes it disappear.
Her riches aren't gifts but loans; they don't linger here.
Today she proffers truths which are tomorrow's lies.

360

365

Honourable Fame

It's easy to be deceived; Fortune's ties
consist of sudden cruel accidents,
like fire, mishap, illness' torments,
trading disasters, be it on water or on land.
Lovely art gives with a generous hand,
no creature would be denied her bounty.

370

375

Mankind

Honourable Fame, can you explain to me:
why does Mercury who fosters art's progression,
hold that rod, with such a brave expression,
with two knotted snakes? What a strange sight!

Honourable Fame

I'll do my best to clarify, to shed some light:
It's a sign of peace, that rod he grasps
and the two fearless writhing asps,
one a sweet female, the other is a male,

380

signify that his wise reason must not fail
to avail itself of arguments worded in such a way
that neither clerk nor layman can gainsay
their great wisdom, nor contradict by right.

385

Mankind

And who are those people standing aside,
as if they're there to help, as faithful as they can?
One is a woman, the other is a man;
I'd like to know: what's their significance?

390

Intelligent Spirit

The lady's name is given as Experience,
the man, depicted as Mercury's neighbour,
holds a spade called Diligence; his name is Labour,
so it is a fitting tool. Their help is stable;
without it Mercury would not be able
to bring the blessed arts to earth
for us. These are helpers of great worth,
who've given loyal service without intermission
for centuries.

395

Honourable Fame

I have a strong suspicion
that art cannot achieve any success
without diligent Labour, and I must stress
that Experience plays an essential part.

400

Mankind

This explanation has gladdened my heart;
I'm happy now I understand the depiction;
a heart of stone would surely feel emotion
and warm to art and all her lovers too.

405

Honourable Fame

In the beginning God was the first Creator, who
used the Holy Spirit and its powerful nature,

described so well and with such truth in Scripture.

410

Philosophy also came into existence
through God, and then made her presence
felt in our hearts, a gift incomparable
and of great use and help to spirits mortal,
encouraging us to look beyond our earthly cares.

Philo[sophia]?

415

Reason

So that we will be able to have our share
of Heaven; as Philon openly stated.

He thought Philosophy was so elevated,
saying that she is a science which clearly explains
all that to Divine and human concerns pertains,
as mother of all science worthy of great esteem.

420

Honourable Fame

It was Philosophy's invention, it would seem,
that made Mercury adorn with statues of gold
the land of Egypt. She caused Lycurges¹³ bold
to give good laws to Lacedemonia.

425

And it was also through Philosophia
that Solon¹⁴ gave Athens great prosperity;
that Pythagoras had the inventivity
to give the towns in Greece good laws
and ordinances; that there were no flaws
in what Plato did in Arcadia,¹⁵ as we find;
that the thoughts of his philosophical mind
and that of others, that is for sure,
have left a legacy that will endure
in this world, of honourable fame.

430

435

Reason

We cannot omit from this Astrology's name,
the spirit of nature found her worthy of praise
and Mercury too thought her divine;
Thales Milesius,¹⁶ with her help, earned
great fame; the first to have learned

Laus Astrologie

440

about the sun's eclipse, through experiment.

Honourable Fame

Ptolemaeus¹⁷ did research into the firmament
of heaven, whilst he lived in Greece.

He learned from Atlas' expertise
about the stars and their condition:
in that science Atlas held a top position.
Poets sang in his honour, of old,
he carried the world on his shoulders, they told,
and their songs spread his fame far and wide.
Cleostratus' knowledge¹⁸ we should not deride:
he revealed the signs of heaven. All these men
were clever scholars with great acumen,
whose learning earned them immortality.

445

450

Reason

Neither must we forget Geometry,
that is an art most laudable
and in many ways very valuable
with a subtlety which shows perfection.

Laus Geometrie

455

Intelligent Spirit

She needs Arithmetic for her correction,
sisters born of one mother, very loyal.

Reason

Forts and castles, cities and palaces royal
were built precisely as they calculated.

460

Honourable Fame

It was in Egypt, Plinius¹⁹ narrated,
that this subtle art was first employed,
because the river Nile destroyed
and inundated all its separate parts,
which were rebuilt with the help of these arts
and every one as good as new.

465

Reason

Before Abraham, Josephus²⁰ knew,
came into Egypt, it was an unknown art.
After that 'twas Plato, who was very smart,
who brought her into Greece, so much is plain;
and pupils who could not master or attain
this art, were from his school expelled.

Josephus de antiquitatibus

470

Honourable Fame

Pythagoras, who in virtues excelled,
a hundred oxen for a sacrifice donated,
a hecatombe it's called (that's stated),
because he judged he'd found the apogee
of perfection in this art; who would not agree
that his fame should be broadcast all over the earth?

475

Reason

Arithmetic is also of great worth
because it makes the merchants affluent.
'Twas Mercury who first did invent
this art in Phoenicia; 'twas important in trade
which needed accurate sums as an aid.
So from Phoenicia this art then came
and was held in high esteem, her fame
increased, since God himself set great store
by it.

Laus Arithmetice 480

485

Intelligent Spirit

Without this art, what's more,
trade and commerce could not progress,
and it's important that we stress
its practitioners, many of enormous repute.

490

Honourable Fame

So it's important that we should
remember Archimedes and Eudoxus²¹ too.
Of great importance in this is Euclid, who

should be honoured for his contribution,
since he made all that was in a rough condition²²
very smooth: his name should live forever.

495

Mankind

It is right: these scholars are all clever,
these masters of art of divine inspirations
should be the rulers and lords of all nations,
for without the arts and their learning
the world would be coarse, rough and unfitting
for people; we would all be, I bet,
like dumb beasts.

500

Intelligent Spirit

Laus Rhetorice

However, we mustn't forget
Rhetoric, which is the food of eloquence,
which helps to sweeten man's existence;
without her, without reason he would be,
like animals.

505

Honourable Fame

Aristides²³ would agree:
Mankind would not be fit to rule
if eloquence had not been the tool
with which unreason was put down;
Mercury gave her a pearly crown;
her merit is greater than all silver or gold.

510

Reason

Diffinitio Eloquentie

This is an art which gives riches untold
to mankind; his wise words she enhances.
She will not allow wrong utterances,
she's considered Queen of humanity
by Princes and Emperors.

515

Honourable Fame

Take oratory,

which, in Athens, she created;
but to sum up all that was narrated
by Athenian orators long ago,
would be tedious.

520

Reason

I'm sure you know
that the Lacedemonians embraced
this art soon after and then raised
it to new heights of sense and wisdom.

525

Honourable Fame

The Romans too made her very welcome
and showed that they were quite ingenious
in using her; at least that is what Tullius²⁴
tells us in *Oratore* of the excellence
of orators and their eloquence,
and that it is most desirable to find
orators with a scientific mind,
who will be able to teach the ignorant
or a simple person.

530

Reason

So they were adamant
that orators who were very smart
should be revered as masters of their art,
even though hate and envy tried their best
to diminish that

535

Honourable Fame

in their own evil interest.
But their names forever more will live!

Intelligent Spirit

And now we come to Music who can give
joy to Mankind and stir their feeling
and get even those creatures moving

Laus Musice 540

who have no reason, as Orpheus found,
who first in Thrace with Music's sound
inspired wild beasts to dance and sing.

545

Honourable Fame

Mercury possessed a very special thing
(which he gave to Orpheus), an instrument.

Reason

It's very true that Musica is excellent
for David (a man much loved by God)
drove out all melancholy thought
with Music, made odes and Psalms also.

550

Honourable Fame

With his harp he calmed Saul's heart, long ago,
for when Saul suffered his fits of insanity,
inspired by the devil (this happened frequently),
then David would come to him and play
and sing songs of praise to God; the way
he played his harp evoked sweet calm,
which always chased away the harm
done to Saul's spirit by devilish inspiration;
this Scripture tells us.

555

Reason

Its strongest exhortation
is that we should express our gratitude
with psalms, honouring Our Lord's beatitude,
and also with all the instruments of Musica.

560

Honourable Fame

Once upon a time wise laws in Arcadia,
in a manner most efficacious, decreed
that everyone had to learn Music sweet
till they were thirty years at least.
And when this custom then decreased

Caecilius Plinius et Raphael
*volescat anima?*²⁵ 565

and disappeared, as Plinius outlines,
they fell into such evil designs
that they incurred the hate of all humanity.

570

Reason

There's no shame in singing excessively
in praise of Music. In all provinces
she was, and is, loved by Kings and Princes
who honour her and treat her graciously.

575

Intelligent Spirit

She is the foundation of Poetry,
and Poets are exalted beings
who in all their writings
use song and clever composition.

Artis Poetice Laus

580

Honourable Fame

The praise of Poets should have no limitation
for a Divine Spirit sets them aflame;
Philon gave them the gracious name
of Children of God with sacred art.

This same gift lodged in Ovidius' heart;
there is in each of us, he states,
a God, who evidently activates
and sets alight these passionate fires
with which the heavenly spirit inspires
us, as if we're a field divinely sown.

*Est Deus in nobis; agitante
calescimus illo. &c.²⁶*

585

Reason

Music gladdens our heart, as is known,
as does Poetry, but she helps to better
our morals; this is according to the letter
of Horace: in amusing and teaching, he said,
he hits the nail on the head
who can instruct and entertain.

590

*Omne tulit punctu[m] qui miscuit
utile dulci²⁷*

595

Honourable Fame

Homer is the father, I am certain,
and the head of all the famous bards;
Euripedes was a master in these arts:
he did it through his tragedies,
Aristophanes through clever comedies, 600
princely compositions, it's well known,
just as Sophocles has shown
a learned doctrine, of great value.
But I must stop; if I'd pursue
all these great poets and their fame, 605
I would need to be better at this game
than Mercury himself; he is the peak!
Had I a hundred tongues with which to speak,
and yet a hundred, I must stress again,
I could not even begin to attain 610
the proper level of praise that's due
to these poets laureate.

Reason

Very able too
were the Romans and very expert;
and eternal praise is their just desert.
We should to Virgil first award it 615
for his great work.

Honourable Fame

He was rewarded
by St. Augustine, who took his part,
he was a devout lover of all art.
He wrote a poem, forty lines in length,
in which he honours, with considerable strength, 620
Maro's name and his eternal memory.

*Ergo ne supremis potuit vox
improba verbis.&c.²⁸*

Intelligent Spirit

Petrus Crinitus wrote a wonderful history
which long ago did bring to light

Petrus Crinitus

all the poets' lives which might
be worthy of being lovingly remembered.

625

Mankind

I think that you have engendered
a fire, Honourable Fame, in my heart
to serve the very core of lovely art,
just as the Poets have done long before;
and I would like to hear some more:
which art should I, with steadfast application,
pursue the most; which will improve my station,
from which will I receive most benefit?

630

Honourable Fame

The art by which you will most profit,
I almost forgot, but it's essential,
of all the arts esteemed she is the principal
and will show you the way without doubt:
that's Grammar. She can be proud,
and with reason; she is the very base
of all the good arts; turn your face
towards her: and then you'll progress.

Laus Crammatice

635

640

Reason

That is why Mercury did stress
that he practised this art primarily,
for no other art (however much you study)
can without Grammar be understood.

645

Honourable Fame

Many scholars however expert and good
took Vives²⁹ advice and paid heed
when he said: Grammar's what you need!
Grammatici they called themselves with pride
and set other epithets aside
even if they had brought them reputations
as poets or orators.

650

Mankind

These secret foundations
Of all noble arts in God found their origin.

Reason

Without Grammar it is impossible to begin,
they who try are deceived by stupid folly,
like young birds who are in a frenzy
to fly whilst their wings are not yet grown.

655

Honourable Fame

There are other arts which are known
as clever craft: you must recall
Masonry is one, famed above all
because countries and towns receive decoration
from her; so much skilful ornamentation
with which Architecture lends her a hand.

660

Reason

And there are others, you understand,
we can't name them all; 'tis too much.
But there is one which I must name as such,
worthy of mention, you'll agree,
as one of the arts that are called 'free',
every bit as important as Poetry divine.

665

Honourable Fame

That is Pictura, painting, an art so fine,
esteemed everywhere and considered to be
worthy of honour as a form of silent Poetry.
For just as Poetry can evoke emotion in Mankind
so also is Pictura able, as you'll find,
but without words, to make his senses aware.
Just as a Poet can, with learned verbal care,
tell tales and stories of days long ago,
so can a painter wars and battles show
and bring to life things that have happened

Laus picture

670

675

as if we saw them before our eyes at present;
painting should be esteemed to a high degree.

680

Reason

And what's more, everywhere you now see
that a Painter with his brushes and skills
shows forts, castles, countries, cities and only fills
a small canvas which depicts all that.

685

Honourable Fame

That is why Zeuxis³⁰ was not at all sad
to show off the tricks of his trade,
against famous Parrhasius,³¹ and made
(and this was meant as a test
to see who could use his skills best)
a painting of a vine so natural,
that he managed to deceive all
the birds; he deserved to be well-known!

690

Reason

But hear what then Parrhasius has shown:
a linen cloth painted with such perfection
that Zeuxis thought it was a real protection
for a painting that he wanted to exhibit.
But when Zeuxis wanted to remove it,
he found himself deceived and defeated.

695

Honourable Fame

The birds had found themselves cheated
by Zeuxis' craftsmanship, so delicate,
but what Parrhasius managed to create
was even better: so that the art
did cheat the artist.

700

Reason

Wasn't that smart?
That's why for ever and a day

705

that art and its practitioners may
and must, be praised in worthy chronicles.

Honourable Fame

The same is true of Apelles,³²
revered as a painter without parallel,
by Alexander the Great as well.

710

Alas, after his death he left a legacy
of Venus unfinished; there is no country
where you can find anyone, any way,
to complete it.

Reason

Finally I want to say
that these Gillyflowers, noble and excellent
deserve poetic praise as a great compliment
and have deserved it in several ways.

715

Honourable Fame

Their rhetorical skills first merit praise:
they have earned plenty of poetical fame
and can proudly give themselves the name
of Poets; and they proved their mastery
as accomplished Painters.

720

Mankind

Their silent Poetry
earns praise, as do all good arts refined;
they wished this question to be defined:
what gives Mankind in the practice of the arts
the greatest inspiration?

725

Intelligent Spirit

From our simple hearts
as Marigolds, we give our answer, this is it:
that honourable fame which causes honest profit
to be renowned in every corner of the land

Conclusio

gives Mankind the greatest encouragement
to practise the arts to their lasting benefit.

730

Honourable Fame

Because without honourable fame, what profit
would an artist be able to enjoy? I believe,
his work would almost make him grieve
and his love of art would soon disappear.

735

Reason

That's why we build on honourable fame here,
and intelligent spirit must then use its influence
to attain art for all clerks of poetic excellence.
that's what I, Reason, wish to make clear.

Honourable Fame

Therefore Princes and Lords must bow here
to art, for she brings great prosperity
to countries and towns.

740

Mankind

She brings harmony,
in short, and love to brothers in art,
wisdom and virtue are very much part
of an artist and show his honest nature.

745

Reason

Avarice, who is an evil figure,
who darkens wisdom and virtue,
should be exiled; we should listen to
honest profit, spread her fame and reputation
and that of art.

Honourable Fame

This is our salutation,
to you, my Lords, from all the Marigolds,
we hope you liked what you were told:

750

that all noble arts evoke our admiration.

755

May this provide Mankind with ample inspiration.

FINIS

NOTES

¹ M. Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *Een onderzoek naar het leven, het werk en de literaire opvattingen van Cornelis van Ghistele (1510/11–1573), rederijker en humanist* (Gent: KANTL, 1996).

² *Spelen van sinne vol scoone moralisacien* (Antwerp: W. Silvius, 1562).

³ Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *op.cit.*, pp. 205-07.

⁴ Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *op.cit.*, pp. 289-342.

⁵ *De Violieren* was the name of the Antwerp Chamber which organised the competition in 1561.

⁶ The letter Y, symbol of the choices to be made in life: the narrow steep road to salvation on the right and on the left the wide and easy road to perdition.

⁷ Literally: unrest or trouble, but here portrayed as a thing that does not stop, hence the translation 'rattle'.

⁸ Lybitina is the Roman goddess of funerals; here therefore a metaphor for death.

⁹ Not clear, though Phocylides was a term referring to a gnomic hexameter poem composed in Miletus in the first half of the 6th century BC or to its poet. Cp. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996), p. 1173 (hereafter *OCD*).

¹⁰ Aristippus was an associate of Socrates; the first to charge a fee for teaching; *OCD* (1996), p. 161.

¹¹ Philo of Alexandria, c. 20 BC-50 AD, Jewish hellenist philosopher; *OCD*, p. 1167-68.

¹² This is an emblem from a collection by Andreas Alciatus, first published in Augsburg 1531, then in Venice, 1546; cp. A Henkel and A. Schöne, *Emblematum Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI und XVII Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1978) and M. Vinck-van Caekenberghe, *op. cit.* pp. 204-06. The text above the picture reads 'Honour feeds the arts', the quatrain below is paraphrased in Van Ghisteles text, ll. 353-401.

¹³ Lycurgus, c. 820 BC, Thracian king, founder of Sparta or Lacedaemon; *OCD*, p. 897.

¹⁴ Solon, sage, lawgiver and poet, laid the foundation of the society of classical

Athens; *OCD*, p. 1421.

¹⁵ Plato (*Republic*, 10) refers to the long-standing quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry and to the superiority of Philosophy. Only if the Poets are willing to take advice from Philosophy can they be admitted to the ideal state. *OCD*, pp. 1169-70.

¹⁶ Thales of Miletus, c. 640-546, one of the seven sages of Greece, mathematician and astrologer, was thought to have prophesied the eclipse of the sun of 28 May 585; *OCD*, p. 1491.

¹⁷ Claudius Ptolemaeus of Alexandria, active c. 142-c. 170, geographer and astronomer; his writings were the main source of geographical and mathematical knowledge in the Middle Ages; his cosmographical writings were a summary of the entire astronomical knowledge of the Ancients; *OCD*, p. 1273-75.

¹⁸ Cleostratus of Tenedos, astronomer; cp. H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorosokratiker* (1952), 6; *OCD*, p. 196.

¹⁹ Gaius Plinius Secundus or Pliny the Elder, 23/4-79 famous for his *Naturalis historia*; *OCD*, p. 1179-98.

²⁰ Flavius Josephus, c. 37-95, Jewish historian; *OCD*, p. 798-99. Van Ghistele refers here to his *Antiquitates Iudaicae* which were by 1561 available in Dutch translation.

²¹ Eudoxus of Cnidus, c. 390-c. 340 BC substantially advanced number theory and strongly influenced Euclid; *OCD*, p. 565-66.

²² Euclid's *Elements* were enormously influential in the Middle Ages as in more recent times. This particular remark may refer to the fact that he clarified and advanced our understanding of mathematics; *OCD*, p. 564.

²³ Publius Aelius Aristides, 117-after 181, was a sophist and man of letters who studied in Athens and Pergamum; cp. *OCD*, p. 160-61.

²⁴ Marcus Tullius Cicero's *De oratore* was very influential in humanist poetic theory and Van Ghistele's 'Diffinitio Eloquentia', too, clearly owes much to Cicero.

²⁵ Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus or Pliny the Younger, c. 61-c. 112; *OCD*, p. 1198. The rest of this gloss is unclear.

²⁶ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6, 5.

²⁷ Horace, *Epistula ad Pisones*, l. 343.

²⁸ M. Vinck-van Caekenbergh, *op. cit.* pp. 323-24 explains this confusing reference to St Augustine as stemming from an ode to Vergil by the Roman emperor Octavius Augustus, which was included in a work by the Florentine humanist Petrus Crinitus, *Libri de poetis latinis* (1505) which Van Ghistele mentions in l. 624. I should add that Van Ghistele's gloss is incomplete and should read: 'Ergo ne supremis potuit vox improba verbis/tam dirum mandare nefas?' ('Could then the wicked voice cause such a dreadful crime to the noblest words?').

Cornelis van Ghistele's Defence of Rhetoric

²⁹ Juan Luis Vives (born Valencia, 1492 – died Bruges, 1540), a Spanish-Dutch humanist.

³⁰ Zeuxis of Heraclea, c. 397 BC (?), painter; *OCD*, pp. 1638-39.

³¹ Parrhasius, c. 397 BC, painter, *OCD*, p. 1116.

³² Apelles of Colophon and Ephesus, c. 332 BC, was the only painter whom Alexander the Great allowed to paint his portrait; *OCD*, p. 118-19.